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BOOKS BY
ETHEL COOK ELIOT

BUTTERCUP DAYS
FIREWEED
LITTLE HOUSE IN THE FAIRY WOOD
THE HOUSE ABOVE THE TREES
THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THINGS
THE VANISHING COMRADE
THE WIND BOY
WAUL & DYKE, INC.

"You lamb! Now don't faint and be a goat."

THE WINDMILL BOOKS

WAUL & DYKE, Inc.

BY

ETHEL COOK ELIOT

ILLUSTRATED BY

MANNING DeV. LEE

jEl45wa

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
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CHAPTER I

THE GUESTS ARRIVE

JANE DYKE was surprised herself that she had accepted Grace Merriman's invitation for this week-end party. For of all the colorless girls in Miss Burk's school—and it had a private school's usual proportion—Grace Merriman was, without exception, the most colorless. Added to that, she was only a Freshman, while Jane was a Senior.

For weeks now, ever since her first appearance in the school, this younger girl had looked up to the older girl as to a superior creature. And Jane, because it was her nature, had returned Grace's admiration with careless kindness. But now she was going further than that. Here she was actually giving a precious week-end to the "child." She was bumping along in

a beach wagon, which had been sent to the station by Grace's mother, tucked up with the other guests, like parcels being delivered. Their address was Surfgate, summer place of the Merriman family.

She began studying her companions in this adventure, hoping to be surprised by something especially entertaining in somebody. But as she herself was in the back seat of the beach wagon, and those in the two seats ahead of her were already discovering amusement and interest in each other, she didn't make much of that. There were one strange girl from another school and three strange boys. Grace, with no social sense about pairing the girls and boys, had climbed up into the seat beside her admired Jane; and Beryl, Jane's chum at Miss Burk's, had crowded in at the other side. Beryl had been asked for Jane, to make her acceptance more certain, of course. But just why she had accepted so readily Jane was not sure.

The corners of Jane's lips twitched into a mischievous smile as she remembered one of her own reasons for coming. She believed now actually that she had only decided to be one of this party when Grace had added to her words of invitation the information that, much as she had

hoped for him, and counted on him, her young uncle, Paul Waul, had sent "regrets."

"Really!" Jane had snatched at it. "Are you quite certain?"

"Yes. I'm dreadfully sorry. You see there's another house party he was promised for—oh, quite long ago, he says. I can put mine off, of couse, for some time when he——"

But Jane had already come to her decision. "Oh, no. Don't. Let's have it this week, if Miss Burk will let us."

Grace's anxious little face beamed relief. "That's too sweet of you, Jane Dyke," she cried. "And you will come! Mother herself insists that this week is the best. It's apt to get cold any minute now, too cold for Surfgate. It's uncertain how long Mother will keep the house open. I wasn't at all sure you'd want to come, Jane! You are a dear!"

"How can you be such a silly!" Jane exclaimed in her kindliest manner. "I'd adore to come, of course."

Jane had hugged to herself, ever since, a solid sense of satisfaction in what she was escaping. Everybody at Miss Burk's knew all about Paul Waul, had known from almost the first day of the school term. He was a Senior at Williams

College, and a notable student the school gathered, and shuddered as they gathered. Did he play football? Oh, no. He thought that the world was too full of really interesting things for one to do, to spend one's time in mere athletics! Heavens! What were the more interesting things? Grace gave her hearers to understand that the things which really interested this wonderful young uncle of hers were things of the mind. He read thousands of books a year, and he would probably graduate with "Very High Honors" in Science.

That, naturally, was enough for the school. And besides, it is very bad form at Miss Burk's to boast about one's relatives. It simply isn't done.

Suddenly Beryl, who had one arm linked in Jane's, leaned to her ear and murmured in so low a tone that there was no danger of Grace's catching the words, "Isn't this just too dreary, my dear? Do you know why I am here at all?"

Jane came out of her own meditation instantly, turning her attention to her chum and, incidentally, to the weather. The day, which when she last noticed it had been a bright blue October one of utmost perfection had turned right about and was now showing another face. A wash of

cold gray was spreading across the sky, and the country landscape through which they were speeding had changed from gay to dull.

Beryl shivered and snuggled closer to Jane. Jane herself buttoned up snugly about her neck the white wool sport jacket she was wearing and slid down farther under the robe which Grace had pulled about their knees. Then Jane answered Beryl, careful that Grace should not hear. "Of course I know why you came, Beryl. 'Cause Janey was coming, and you couldn't, you wouldn't, leave your best friend in the lurch."

But Beryl would not laugh. "You can be awfully dumb, Jane, when you are dumb! I don't suppose it ever dawned on you that I was just crazy to go to the house were Alfreda Waul grew up and began practising, and where, even now, she sometimes stays for a few days at a time. You'd think that was silly of me. Grace did tell us there was no danger of Alfreda Waul's being there this week-end. I heard her all right. But just the same, it is thrilling merely to see the house, to see her piano. Am I sickeningly sentimental, Jane?"

Alfreda Waul, of course, was the great Alfreda Waul, the pianist. Beryl, who herself some day meant to be a great pianist, had set

Alfreda Waul up as her particular star in the musical firmament.

Jane laughed, her own especial brand of short chuckles, and replied to Beryl: "Yes, you're dreadfully sentimental—at least, about Alfreda Waul. But do you know why I'm here?"

"Because you wanted to please Grace, of course."

"Well, perhaps—partly. But the biggest reason is because that most wonderful student and perfect gentleman, Paul Waul, is *not* to be here. You can't call me sentimental!"

"Don't worry. No one in this world will ever accuse you of sentimentality," Beryl said, with some asperity. Jane's striking lack of this quality had a way of annoying her friends at times. "Not that I blame you about Paul Waul," Beryl added a little more amiably, after a second's contemplation. "Any one with such an idiotic name must be simply unspeakable. Let's hope Grace never puts one over on us and we have to meet the creature."

Beryl was an intense young person. She lifted her face now, and with big dark eyes surveyed the gray world through which they were bumpily rushing.

"It's getting drearier by the minute," she proclaimed. "And cold! My word!"

"We're almost there! We'll see Surfgate in a minute now," Grace suddenly cried from the other side of Jane, in her excitement and pleasure daring to snuggle against Jane and squeeze her arm.

It had been an hour's drive from the station through uncultivated country, for Surfgate was an isolated summer place built on so wild and rugged a spot of the Atlantic seacoast that other summer builders had never been attracted there.

The occupants of the beach wagon sat up in their places now and looked ahead with awakened interest. Their goal rose before them, as the automobile jiggled around a sudden curve in the road, gigantic and dark, towering up against the sky on an abrupt boulder of rocky earth. The house reminded Jane of baronial castles she hoped some day to visit in Scotland. But it was not in any way architecturally like a baronial castle. It was strictly American, a huge pile of stone and lumber, windows, wings, porches and porticos all thrown together helter-skelter for the comfort of those within, rather than for the artistic pleasure of those without. It was

merely the dark atmosphere of mystery about the place which brought the romantic comparison to Jane's mind.

Beryl shuddered. Beryl always did overdo things. "Suppose, just suppose, Jane," she urged at Jane's ear, "suppose that place is bewitched! It looks as though it might be. I feel as though some dark fate is waiting for us there. It might be—just suppose Paul Waul opens the front door for us!"

Jane, who had been ready to laugh at Beryl's extravagance, stiffened into an appalled attitude at her humor. Beryl pursued the idea. "Why not? There are only three boys and four of us girls. Wouldn't it be Grace's idea of a delightful surprise? Suppose——"

"For mercy's sake, stop your supposing," Jane hissed in an uneasiness that was only about one third pretended. "And don't go casting spells or enchantments or any of your Irish tricks, now. You look exactly like a witch above a boiling pot this minute. You do, you do!"

But Beryl had not been entirely play acting. She stopped posing as a seer now and said earnestly in her own nice, husky voice with a delightful echo of an Irish accent, "It's not I who am casting spells. It's that house. Truly.

Don't you yourself feel that there's something queer about it? Something uncanny and strange?"

Jane shook her head, denying it. But that was not entirely honest of Jane.

The gray light in the sky cast, strangely enough, a yellow reflection on the great house, a lurid yellow. The noise of surf pounding somewhere on rocks came to Jane's ears even above the racket the auto's engine was making as it struggled in low gear up the uneven steep road. And to put the finishing touch to the decidedly weird impression Jane was getting of the place, just as they lumbered in between the two huge boulders which served as gateposts, a gypsy woman crossed under the house windows and strode across the terrace toward the driveway.

A gypsy in full costume, her head bright-kerchiefed, large rings in her ears, many bracelets jangling on her arms, her garments fluttering red and yellow and purple color, would have excited Jane's imagination in any case. But there was something about the woman herself, something about her personality that was doubly thrilling. She held her head with such a royal disdain, and she came down the steep

flight of rocky terrace steps into the driveway with such long, free, defiant strides, that Jane thought she might be the very queen of all the gypsies.

It did not matter that her jangling jewelry was obviously brass and glass, or that her brightly dyed garments were merely rags; her dignity was almost overpowering.

As she approached the place where the beach wagon with its load of wide-eyed young people had stopped, she slowed her stride ever so little, but deliberately, and swept the whole party with a hawk-like dark glance. Jane saw that her aquiline features were stamped with a strange refinement and that her lips had a proud curve which was almost frightening.

But even as Jane stared, enchanted, the gypsy swerved sharply in her course, and stepping down among the bushes which grew thickly against the built-up road, disappeared from sight. She was gone in her flutter of red and yellow and purple rags to the jangling of her brass gewgaws. Jane strained her eyes but where the gypsy had just been she saw only the bushes blowing and bending and trembling in the misty wind.

Afterward, very soon in fact, Jane was to re-

member that regal gypsy as the first note struck in the clash of mystery which was about to burst over the heads of the light-hearted week-enders and make the next twenty-four hours the most exciting in her life up to this point.

When Jane turned from having craned her neck to see how the gypsy could have vanished so completely and so suddenly, she was attracted by a stir at an upper window just over their heads. She lifted her eyes and saw a young servant girl leaning out. One of her hands, its fingers spread wide, was against the blind. The other was clenched down hard on the stone sill. And although a noisy auto party of seven young people was alighting under her very nose, it was obvious that, for the little maid, they did not exist. Her strained and anxious attention was riveted on that spot in the blowing bushes where the gypsy woman an instant ago had disappeared, and her face was exactly the shade of her frilly white cap.

But when Jane had taken her turn to alight from the auto and lifted her eyes to that window again, the dramatic tableau was gone.

CHAPTER II

JANE MAKES ENEMIES

SURFGATE'S hall was a huge apartment, transecting the house. Its lofty ceiling and darkened spaciousness were so impressive that, just for an instant, the arriving house party became a rather hushed little group of girls and boys clustering together chillily in the drafty great front door. Then Grace's mother, Mrs. Merriman, materialized out of the shadows and came sweeping toward them hospitably, dispelling their uneasiness.

Mrs. Merriman was a surprising mother for a girl like Grace to have. She was tall and fashionably thin. With one hand she held a gorgeous red and gold Chinese shawl draped tightly about her over her straight black frock. Long jade earrings quivered from her ears, and her hair was drawn straight back from her face to a tight knot at the nape of her neck, held by a jeweled comb.

Grace kept Jane's introduction for the last,

in the manner of keeping the best. The other guests had all passed on into the drawing room where tea was waiting for them when Jane found her hand in Mrs. Merriman's and heard Grace saying eagerly, "And, Mamma, here, at last, is Jane. You know all about Jane."

"Indeed, I know all about Jane. Jane has been very good to my little girl. You have had a place in my heart and thoughts for some time, my dear."

This was rather overwhelming. Jane felt that she was getting quite undeserved credit, and she wished now that she had been really kind to Grace, not just casually tolerant of her admiration. On the spot, she determined to do something in the future to merit Mrs. Merriman's idea of her kindness. For she thought that Mrs. Merriman was one of the most fascinating persons she had ever seen. It was not just her striking clothes and her manner; it was even more her piquant face with its narrow, inscrutable eyes, and her wide, thin-lipped mouth, deep cornered and clever looking.

In fact, Jane was so impressed by Grace's mother that her own accustomed social ease utterly forsook her. Mrs. Merriman noticed this without surprise; she was used to such reactions

to her own personality. But to save Jane from further embarrassment she turned about to her daughter, and putting both hands on Grace's shoulders, she held her at arms' reach, and in a very dramatic stage whisper, intended for Jane as well, said, "Poor Grace! My darling, the unforeseen has occurred. It is too utterly disappointing!"

Grace's face fell. "You don't mean Aunt Augusta! She's never come to spoil everything! Not Aunt Augusta, Mother!"

Mrs. Merriman nodded, a dimple showing at one of the deep corners of her mouth, her narrow eyes crinkling delightfully in a smile at her daughter's expense. "Yes, Aunt Augusta, unfortunately. She turned up yesterday at tea time. There's nothing to do about it."

"Then Jane can't have the Blue Room. And I wanted her to have the Blue Room so!" Grace was fairly wailing.

"Oh, yes, Jane shall have the Blue Room. That's all arranged for. It was quite simple. Aunt Augusta didn't hear about the party till this morning. Then, to my complete surprise, she had all her things moved up into the tower. She says it is to get away from the noise you'll make. She doesn't mean to have her afternoon

naps interfered with. She did it herself, you see. Quite her own idea. So the Blue Room's Jane's."

"Well, that's something!" Grace breathed her relief.

"Come along now, then. We'll make the best of it." Saying this, Mrs. Merriman put an arm lightly across each girl's shoulders and the three followed the others into the drawing room.

Two log fires blazed in marble fireplaces at opposite ends of the long apartment, giving light and cheerfulness to the rather heavy grandeur of the furnishings. A tea table stood in one corner near a grand piano, spread with a white cloth, its silver appointments catching the fires' radiance. And, sitting behind the tea table in a high-backed carved chair, Aunt Augusta had already begun to pour out. Jane knew that it must be Aunt Augusta. No wonder Grace's face had fallen to find her here; for if one were to judge by facial expression, then this Aunt Augusta was a sour, dour old lady.

Jane was the last of the guests to be presented to Aunt Augusta. As she stood close in front of the tea table, acknowledging the introduction, she noticed a man's half-finished gray sock lying among the bright teacups where the old lady

had put it down with the knitting needles still sticking up in it, when she began to pour the tea. It was a coarse gray sock, very stiff and scratchy looking. And what a peculiar place to have laid it, on this dainty, immaculate tea table! Perhaps it was destined for Mr. Paul Waul. He would be Aunt Augusta's nephew, of course, since Grace was her grandniece. Jane hoped that it was destined for Mr. Waul. And she chuckled!

It was not often that young people being introduced to Aunt Augusta chuckled. She looked up sharply at this young person, Jane Dyke. And Jane, looking down at her, subdued as best she could the ripple of amusement in her tell-tale hazel eyes—a ripple that proclaimed the chuckle genuinely hers. For Aunt Augusta was never the person to whom to confide a joke, never, never.

She was dressed in a black creation so jetty with beads that it had very much the appearance of ebony armor, or perhaps the trappings of a beetle. Her black hair was coiled in a complicated but austere fashion high on her head. It was very thick and luxuriant and almost blue-black, that marvelously dressed hair. It was

a wig, but Jane did not suspect this. The old lady's eyes made up for their smallness and closeness together above her aristocratic old nose by being the blackest eyes Jane had ever looked into, and so snapping. Jane thought the glance of those peculiar eyes "spiked."

Yet, in spite of the decidedly disagreeable impression Aunt Augusta had made on Jane, Jane was not a bit prepared for the fact, which instantly appeared, that she herself was making an even worse impression on Aunt Augusta. What could Aunt Augusta possibly have against her? Why did she pronounce her name, "Jane Dyke," with such relish of malice? Was it just because of that foolish chuckle? The next instant she had her answer.

"Well, Miss Dyke, I have already heard of you. For your visit here—if I understand the matter—you are to sleep in the room that until to-day has always been considered mine."

So that was it! But how tactless of Grace, or of her mother! Jane didn't care where she slept, not she. She didn't want the old lady's precious Blue Room.

Mrs. Merriman came near Jane and suddenly put her hand on her shoulder. Jane was made

a little dizzy by the exotic perfume which breathed from the Chinese scarf. Mrs. Merriman was saying:

"Oh, but Aunt Augusta! We mustn't let this young guest of ours feel unwelcome to the Blue Room. It is yours, of course, always, when you are here. That goes without saying. But you yourself, of your own accord, moved up to the tower this morning. That's how it fell to Jane."

"Oh, really——" Jane began; but Mrs. Merriman did not let her go on.

"It is all perfectly all right, my dear," she insisted. "Aunt Augusta is just as glad as I am that Grace's best friend at school is to have the nicest guest room at Surfgate. Everything is just as it should be."

Jane could see, well enough, that Aunt Augusta was far from agreeing with these statements; but there was nothing, really, that Jane could do or say about it. She waited about, embarrassed and distressed, for Aunt Augusta to offer her tea.

Beryl, ignoring tea and food, had already gravitated by her own inner laws to the piano; she was sitting on the bench, softly playing dance music. Max Colt, one of the boys of the party, put down his half-finished cup abruptly, and

coming up to Jane said, "Will you dance?" Let's!" Jane was a little startled by the suddenness of it, but then she had been perfectly aware that, from their meeting at the station, an hour ago, this boy had been especially interested in her. And so, since Aunt Augusta appeared to think she had done her duty at tea pouring and was now enjoying a cup of her own, Jane nodded. They glided out into the center of the room in a complicated fox trot.

"Some mixture, this party. Don't you think?" Max murmured as soon as they were out of hearing of the group at the tea table. "My mother is Mrs. Merriman's best friend. That's what got me in for this kid party. What brought you? And Miss Cosgrave?"

Jane deliberated over answering. They danced perfectly together, and she was delighted with that. But she was not a bit delighted with this boy's tone in asking his question, nor with the words themselves. Finally, she said gently —but Jane gentle meant Jane just a little dangerous—"We came because Grace asked us, of course. We're friends at school."

Max laughed. "Come, now! Grace is only a Freshie, isn't she?—and you girls are Seniors. Besides, Grace isn't your sort. She's a mouse.

You and your friend there—she *can* play I'll say —are the other sort, the opposite of mouse. You can't tell me you chum with Grace."

Max Colt was a type of young man that had never come Jane's way before. There was an air of sophistication about him which was a little disconcerting to a mere boarding-school girl. But, then, she knew that he was a mere "Prep"-school boy. Grace had told her that much about him. He was slim and rather elegant, with slicked-back dark hair, chiseled features, olive skin, and very thick-lashed, sleepy eyes. Jane didn't know whether she was going to like him or not. But she found it impossible at this minute to be anything but rude to him. She stopped dancing, and backing away from him a little, while she looked at him very directly, exclaimed: "If you don't like Grace or her party, why don't you go away? Would your mother mind so much, when you explained to her how really superior you are?"

Deep color flooded his dark face slowly. Just for a breath, Jane thought he was going to slap her. She spoke quickly, trying to soften a little the effect of her sharpness. "Come, let's get some tea. After that ride, we need it."

She turned toward the tea table and the others

who were gathered there, by now thoroughly at home, and chatting, their voices almost drowning the music. But Max stayed a few steps back of Jane all the way across the long room, and from then on for the rest of the tea hour, he did not so much as look at her—at least, not when she might catch him at it.

Mrs. Merriman had gone out of the room while Max and Jane were dancing. Sylvia Hunt-Smith, a fluffy, pretty little light-haired girl, was sitting close beside Aunt Augusta, listening absorbedly and politely to every word the lady let fall. She was a friend Grace had made before coming to Miss Burk's. Jane must ask her about her school, which was Rosebriar —a school to which Jane herself had come very near being sent. Donald King, younger than Max Colt, nearer Grace's age, sat on the other side of Aunt Augusta comfortably in a deep-armed chair. He was as colorless and uninteresting in his way as Grace was in hers. If Grace was a girl mouse, here was a boy mouse.

Cecil Pomeroy, the third of the three strange boys, attracted Jane much more. He was short and fat, good looking in a blond way, and a perpetual joker. He was Max's room-mate at school, Jane had gathered.

It was he who, on Jane's approach to the tea table, picked up one of the two unused cups which were left, and presented it to Aunt Augusta with a flourish. Aunt Augusta received the cup from him with some reluctance, as though she really didn't think that this Jane Dyke deserved her tea. Before she began to pour, with bent head and great deliberation she unclasped a bracelet from her left wrist, and half turning about in her chair, put it on the piano top at her back.

It was a very beautiful bracelet, a circlet of emeralds and diamonds intricately woven together.

"Now, why is she bothering about that and not pouring my tea?" Jane wondered. But then she saw for herself. A cup lay broken in half near Aunt Augusta's hand. Probably the bracelet had knocked against it and done the damage. Aunt Augusta was avoiding a repetition of the accident.

Jane's glance stayed on the beautiful jewels. It was an odd ornament for Aunt Augusta to have been wearing, with her black, and in the afternoon! How very, very beautiful the thing was. Jane was strangely fascinated by it. In all her life, she had never seen such jewels.

CHAPTER III

WHILE BERYL PLAYED

AND even then, Jane did not get her tea. Beryl finished her dance music just as the tea got poured and came to stand by Jane, her arm linked in hers. It was to her that Aunt Augusta offered the cup. When Jane's cup finally did come to her, she felt that it was the most unwelcoming cup she had ever accepted in her whole life. And then, Cecil, in passing Jane the sugar—for Aunt Augusta had taken it quite for granted that Jane wouldn't want sugar—spoiled the drink for her entirely by jovially dropping in four lumps before she could stop him.

"Oh, stop! stop!" Jane cried. "You're spoiling it!"

Cecil laughed loudly. "Oh, no, I haven't spoiled it," he assured her. "That's the way I always take it."

"Take this, then," Jane said, holding the cup toward him. "I can't drink it."

But he retreated backward, still laughing. "No, thanks. I've had mine."

Grace jumped from the depths of a deep chair where she had been sipping her own tea and nibbling cakes, and moved quickly toward the bell rope. "That was the last cup!" she exclaimed as she went. "I'll ring for another."

But Aunt Augusta stopped her, imperatively. "You musn't ring, Grace," she commanded. "I don't consider it fair to the servants, so near dinner time. And anyway, an extra lump of sugar never hurt anybody!"

Poor Grace! She was as disconcerted as a girl can be. She hesitated for just the fraction of a second, with her hand on the bell rope. But Jane shook her head at her and managed to begin sipping at the sickeningly sweet mixture. However, when Grace docilely returned to her own deep chair and her own tea, she had fallen in Jane's estimation. If Jane had been in Grace's place, and not allowed to ring the bell, she would have dashed out to the kitchen herself for a fresh cup for her friend. But, then, it was plain to see that Aunt Augusta had her grandniece thoroughly cowed. Jane's scorn turned to pity. What did a cup of tea more or

less in one's life matter—even after such a cold ride! While to have an aunt like that——!

Without Cecil Pomeroy, that half hour around the tea table might have been a complete failure. Why hadn't Mrs. Merriman stayed? Why had she left this disagreeable old woman to take her place as hostess? Cecil was a relief, however. Not even an Aunt Augusta could dampen his spirits. He made everyone laugh at his silly jokes and horseplay; or perhaps it was only the infection of his own hearty guffaw; for Cecil was the first and loudest to laugh at his own wit.

But as dusk deepened in the room, the young people leaned luxuriously back in their comfortable chairs, and even Cecil grew quiet. It was pleasant to be here after train and auto journey and cold, comforted with tea and cakes and the warmth from the fires. It was very relaxing, too. And Beryl had slipped back to the piano bench, but not to play dance music. The deepening dusk and the glowing fires had put her into one of her "moods." She was playing slow, big chords which soon turned into a low chanting. And then the chanting dissolved into more complicated, victorious, uprushing harmonies. Even the most unmusical of those

sitting there in the dusk were content to stay still and let the beauty of Beryl's music wash over them.

Rain had begun to beat against the tall French windows, and the bare boughs of the dwarfed apple tree tapped irregularly on one of the panes. A manservant entered quietly, and stealing about on his toes, replenished both fires. Jane watched him idly, through half-shut lids Then she straightened with sudden interest and for a minute forgot the music; for as the manservant was leaving the room, a maidservant passed him in the doorway on her way in. It was the same little maid whom Jane had seen leaning out of a window in the upper story when they arrived. Jane watched all her movements with curiosity.

The maid's face was not colorless now, as Jane had first seen it. In fact, she was scarlet, this time, with embarrassment over having to come in among these girls and boys so very nearly her own age, who sat about as though they were half asleep, and still looked at her as she crossed the room and at all that she did. However, she did what she had to do. She went directly to Aunt Augusta's chair and stood there, rigid. In one hand she held a glass of water,

and in the other a powder in a paper. The powder-paper she gave to Aunt Augusta when that lady deigned to reach out her hand. Then she stood, holding the glass of water while the old lady shook the powder into it. Next, she waited at attention, as it were, while Aunt Augusta drained the potion.

"Done to music that way it's ridiculous," Jane thought, chuckling to herself at the idea of Aunt Augusta making such a solemn affair of taking a simple dose of salts or tonic or physic, or whatever it was.

The ritual consummated, the little maid retired with the empty glass and her crumpled bit of paper as stealthily and shyly as she had come.

Then, quite suddenly, Jane noticed Mrs. Merriman standing at the back of the piano, leaning forward on it a little, her face merely a white blur in the shadow. But her Chinese scarf happened to catch the light from the farthest fire, and blazed itself, gold and scarlet. It was the light on the scarf that had drawn Jane's eyes. Otherwise she would not have noticed that Mrs. Merriman was there at all, it had grown so dark in the room. It was quite wonderful of Beryl to go on playing like that when she must barely be able to distinguish the keys.

But Jane wondered how Mrs. Merriman had come back into the room without attracting her attention. Jane had been sitting all the time of Beryl's playing in a position which gave her a view of the door. She had noticed the servants coming and going in spite of their extreme quietness; she couldn't very well avoid noticing them. It was very odd; for if Mrs. Merriman had come in at the door she must have passed directly in front of Jane's chair, as the little maid had done, in order to get to her present position behind the piano.

Well, it didn't matter, really, how Mrs. Merriman had got here if only she would stay now. But Jane's hope was thwarted. Even as she looked at Mrs. Merriman's dim figure, fascinated by the firelight leaping against the Chinese shawl, the figure moved, ever so little, out of the firelight, and then it was not there any more —anywhere.

Jane focused her gaze more keenly. She didn't see how it was possible for Mrs. Merriman to vanish like that, even taking into account the shadows and the confusion of light and shade cast by the blazing fires. Then, Jane's searching gaze lit upon a little low screen outlined against the wall beyond the piano and not far distant

from where Mrs. Merriman had stood. It looked as though it was standing smack against the wall; but that couldn't be. It was a trick the firelight played. For Mrs. Merriman must have gone behind that screen. Indeed, there was no other place for her to have gone, unless she had come out from behind the piano and crossed in front of Jane. And she hadn't done that.

But it was a low little screen. It would barely come to Mrs. Merriman's shoulders. If Mrs. Merriman had gone behind it she must be crouching down, hiding. Impossible! Absurd! There must be a door Jane couldn't see. Mrs. Merriman was never playing hide-and-seek behind her own furniture.

A cold shiver traveled up and down Jane's spine. Beryl's music, the irregular and persistent tap-tapping of those bare boughs against the window pane, and the mysterious appearance and disappearance of their hostess, all contributed to that shiver.

"What's got into me?" Jane asked herself. "This must be what people mean when they talk about 'nerves'!"

Max lounged up from his place near Sylvia, where he had been sitting on a cushion on the

floor, his back against a piano leg. His sudden looming like that out of nowhere, as it seemed, made Jane gasp. He looked across at her, surprised by the strangled sound, and shrugged. Then he turned about to the piano, and with his back to everyone except Beryl, stood quietly, looking down apparently at her hands, playing. But he stayed only an instant. Softly he wandered away, and Jane was aware that he was circling the walls of the room, his face close to the old tapestries and prints, studying them in the shifting firelight.

But Beryl had been startled and disturbed by Max's sudden movements. She broke off abruptly from playing. She lifted one hand and reached for the handkerchief she had put on the top of the piano when she started those great slow chords. Then, in the absent-minded mood that her own music had a way of producing in her, she too, started wandering aimlessly about, her head high, her wide gray Irish eyes brimmed with dreams.

Conversation and stir recommenced. Aunt Augusta spoke, her dry, sharp tone bringing the final disenchantment to the hour.

"Turn on the lights, Grace. I declare, it's quite dark!"

Grace, crossing in front of Jane, went to the screen, which Jane still imagined might be sheltering Mrs. Merriman, raised her arm, and the room was flooded with white light from a dozen candelabra. The electric button Grace had touched was on the wall directly over the screen. And the screen, as Jane had first thought, stood right against the wall. No room for Mrs. Merriman there, even if she had done such an absurd thing as to hide!

Jane chuckled, suddenly, at the grotesqueness of the idea she had cherished, of Mrs. Merriman being discovered crouching behind the screen. And at the instant of her chuckle, Aunt Augusta's voice came again, putting a definite stop at once to the laughter and movement of the young people which had come with the light.

"Well, I never! Where's my bracelet? It's gone?"

In the next breath she rose wrathfully from her chair and took a step toward Jane. "Jane Dyke, what are you snickering about? What is there so funny about my bracelet's having gone?"

"Bracelet? What bracelet?" came the general query.

But Aunt Augusta paid no attention. Neither

did she look again at the piano where the bracelet had been. Her whole attention was given to Jane. "Perhaps you knocked it off, Miss Dyke," she said accusingly. "Yes, that is why you are snickering. Kindly get it for me, then, from under the piano."

CHAPTER IV

THE BLUE ROOM

"WHY, certainly!" Jane was on her feet. "But what do you mean, 'knocked it off'?"

Jane's prompt movement and her surprised face took Aunt Augusta a little aback. She did not answer Jane's question at once.

Meanwhile, Cecil, gallant at last, was already on his hands and knees, searching in Jane's stead for the vanished bracelet. His voice came up from under the piano.

"What does your bracelet look like, anyway, Miss Williams? Is it gold?"

Aunt Augusta replied to him without removing her eyes from Jane's. "Any bracelet you see down there, Mr. Pomeroy, will probably be *the* bracelet."

Cecil bounded to his feet. "No bracelet of any description, under or anywhere about the piano," he reported, cheerily. "But, I say, Miss Williams, what sort of a bracelet is it for which I'm to hunt?"

He had not heard Aunt Augusta's tart reply to this same query, or else he refused to be squelched. He succeeded, at any rate, in distracting her for a while from Jane. She turned to him and looked him up and down with complete exasperation. He stood four-square, smiling back at her innocently. But Jane had not quite escaped from the limelight; for Aunt Augusta suddenly snapped, "You may as well ask Miss Dyke for a description of the lost bracelet, if you find yourself so handicapped without it."

Cecil turned a bright inquiring face toward puzzled Jane. She said hurriedly, "Why, it was a twisted band of diamonds and emeralds. Didn't you see it yourself?"

"He wouldn't have been likely to notice it in such detail," Aunt Augusta answered for Cecil. "You had your opportunity for close study, Miss Dyke, when you put your cup on the piano, very nearly, if not quite, on top of it."

"Put my cup——?" Jane had actually forgotten until this instant that, after a polite effort or two to drink her oversweet tea, she had risen from her place, walked a few steps required between her chair and the piano, and set her cup down on a brass tray there beside Beryl's. But now she remembered.

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed. "But I don't think I noticed the bracelet again then. No, I'm sure I didn't. But I did notice it, most particularly, Miss Williams, when you took it from your wrist and put it up there. I stood looking at it. It was so beautiful!" U. S. 690066

"Yes, I observed you stand looking! But if you thought it so beautiful, why did you snicker when I found it had disappeared, just now?"

Aunt Augusta put the question with great intentness, looking at Jane piercingly. But the only answer Jane offered was a blush. How could she own that she had been snickering—if one called it that—at the mental picture she had made for herself of the beautiful and dignified Mrs. Merriman crouching down behind a little screen, hiding in her own drawing room?

But the blush appeared to be enough of an answer for Miss Williams. She turned her eyes at last from Jane's flushed face and said distinctly, and at the same time rather tremblingly, "Well, it is a very, very valuable bracelet. Any one could tell that at a glance. I know, absolutely, that I put it there on the piano before I poured tea for Miss Dyke and Miss Cosgrave, and before Miss Cosgrave began to play. A bracelet hasn't legs. It can't get up and walk

off. And it hasn't wings. So it must be found."

At once Cecil and Jane and Donald and Sylvia and Grace began searching about in the room for the lost article. Beryl and Max were not there to help, for they had left the room before the bracelet was missed, some time before the lights were turned on—no one had noticed exactly when. But the remaining members of the house party poked among the strings of the piano, turned vases upside down, and examined all the cushions and draperies and upholstery in the long room. Jane even went so far as to pick up the half-finished gray sock for examination, and in doing that dropped out the needles. If anything in the world could have added to Aunt Augusta's already completely formed prejudice against Jane, this awkward act would have done so. Jane looked at the dropped stitches appalled and Aunt Augusta looked at her.

And then the dressing bell sounded.

"What shall we do?" Grace asked. "It looks as though the bracelet *had* had wings, Aunt Augusta. It simply isn't here, that's all."

Aunt Augusta by this time was sitting at the end of a little sofa, her hands lying limply in her lap, her face enigmatical. She said, "You'll have to go and get ready for dinner now, all of

you. But this isn't the end of it, not by a long shot. No one need think I won't find my bracelet."

Jane and Grace, arms linked, were the first into the hall. At the foot of the big staircase leading up to the bedrooms they came, suddenly, face to face with Max Colt, who had just stepped out of the telephone booth which was concealed there in a recess. He looked at the girls strangely out of sleepy eyes. But whether his glance was one of indifference or disgust Jane couldn't know. He half nodded to Grace as though to point the fact that the unpleasantness of his expression was intended for Jane.

Jane pretended not to notice anything unusual in Max's behavior, and laughed and talked as naturally with Grace as she could while they were on the way up to the Blue Room, which had caused so much ill feeling on Aunt Augusta's part. Mrs. Merriman had appeared at the head of the stairs to show the guests to their appointed rooms. So Grace was free to devote herself to Jane. She flung open the door of the Blue Room with a victorious gesture.

As Jane stepped over the threshold, she was duly impressed. For it was a truly gorgeous room, done in blue and silver, and exquisite in

every detail. Jane's sense of location and direction was rather a good one, and now she realized at once that the middle window of the three which she now stood facing was the window where she had seen the head of the little maid and her fingers spread on the blind.

Grace noticed her absorption in the windows. "In the morning you'll find that you have a view of the Western Mountains," she told her. "And because this room is in the middle part of the house, the old part, with those two big new wings sticking out on either side, you'll find that you don't hear the surf at all. That's why Aunt Augusta loves to sleep here. She hates the sound of the sea at night, and here, she says, you'd never guess you were within a hundred miles of it."

"Yes? Well, it's a gorgeous room," Jane responded, but a little wearily. "Shall I dare sit on those blue satin chairs, or walk on that silver rug?"

Grace laughed. "I'm simply delighted that you've got this room," she said with more spirit than Jane had even seen her show at school. "Now I'll go and dress for dinner. We've got twenty minutes."

Left alone, the door closed at her back, Jane stood, waiting for something. What it was to be, she did not know, but *something.* She had felt, as she came in, that this Blue Room was more alive than just a room had a right to be. And she was justified.

From the other side of a high, richly carved dark chest of drawers two eyes appeared, wide and staring, meeting hers. Then the upper part of a human figure. It was the little maid who already this afternoon had attracted so much of Jane's attention.

Jane was not a bit startled. She even smiled at the girl and nodded. The face, then, which had had a scared rather frozen look, relaxed, and finally smiled back at Jane.

"Please excuse me," she blurted out. "I was just after locking a drawer in this chist here whin I heard your voices and I got startled like. I sat right down on the floor. Then I didn't know what you would think of me, coming up like a Jack out of the box."

Jane chuckled. "That's it. You did look just like a Jack, or a Jill rather, coming up out of a box. But what are you doing here?"

"Only locking the drawers in the chist, as I

said. And this door I am to lock too. Miss Williams told me to do it this afternoon when I'd finished moving her out, and of course I had to forget."

As she explained, the little maid had crossed the floor and, taking a big key from the frilly pocket of her tiny apron, locked a door opposite the bed and returned the key to her pocket. "By rights," she told Jane, "this room here goes with yours. It's a sitting room. But Miss Williams said she'd keep it. Something or other entirely drove all this locking up business out of my head."

"Yes, I know. The gypsy woman drove it out of your head," Jane said calmly.

The little maid jumped and whirled about at that as though Jane might have stuck a pin into her. "What do you know about the gypsy woman?" she cried in a voice that shook.

Jane went to the little maid and put her hand on her arm. "Nothing to frighten you," she said. "I merely saw you looking after her when I was getting out of the automobile, down there, that's all. But do tell me about this gypsy woman. Do you know, I think she's simply stunning."

The maid drew back, shaking her head.

"How can I tell you about her?" she exclaimed. "How could I know anything?"

Jane shrugged. "That's your business," she owned. "And I didn't mean to ask you questions you wouldn't want to answer. I beg your pardon."

Jane was so frank, so genuine—and besides, she was so pretty! The little maid suddenly melted toward her.

"Of, if only I had a mistress like you," she cried softly, as though to herself, "I wouldn't be where I am now!"

"A mistress like me!" Jane echoed her, surprised. "But I'm only a schoolgirl and I wouldn't know what to do with a lady's maid. Are you Aunt Augusta's maid, by the way?"

The girl nodded. "Yes, worse luck!" she responded. But even as she spoke she looked over her shoulder toward the door as though afraid that Miss Williams might be standing there, hearing everything.

All Jane's sympathy went out to the little maid. But she was much too well brought up, Jane Dyke, to begin discussing a mistress with a servant.

Instead, she said briskly, "Well, I've got to get dressed now. But if there's anything I can

do for you, if you want any help or anything, I'd love it if you'd come and tell me. I shall be here until Sunday afternoon, you know." Then she hesitated, embarrassed. "Look here," she continued, "we must be about the same age, you and I. Sometimes people of the same age can be of more use to each other than people of different ages, don't you think? Anybody can see you're unhappy. I'm just a girl myself. But I might help just the same."

To Jane's increased embarrassment tears rushed into the little maid's eyes and spilled over on to her pale cheeks. She turned her head away, trying to hide her emotion from Jane, and jingled the keys in her tiny pocket.

And as they stood so, not looking at each other, there came a firm step in the hall outside the Blue Room door. The maid heard it first and stiffened, and turned her face toward the door, her eyes saucer-like with fright.

But the door did not swing open. It was the door next it that opened, apparently—the door into the sitting room. It shut with a bang, and there were the quick steps again in there.

"It's herself!" the maid whispered.

"Miss Williams? What if it is! She can't eat us!"

"Sh! Don't let her hear," the maid begged, right into Jane's ear, like a conspirator.

"Is she looking for you?" Jane whispered back. "Oughtn't you to be getting her dressed for dinner?"

"No. She doesn't change for dinner. She goes high-necked. But she may be looking for me all the same—sh!"

The two girls stood close together in the exact center of the Blue Room's silver rug, harkening to the movements the other side of the partition. Jane imagined that she distinguished even the clinkering of Aunt Augusta's black-beetle trappings. Then, for an instant, there followed complete silence.

"She's heard us breathing and is listening," Jane almost thought. In spite of herself she had caught something of the little maid's childish terror.

But, no. There came the rustling of paper, as though the leaves of a book were being rapidly turned. Then, the ring of a bell, and very clearly and distinctly, Aunt Augusta's unpleasant voice.

"Goshen, 1225 M. Yes, young woman, that's precisely what I said, 'M.' "

"She's telephoning!" the little maid breathed.

"Evidently!" Jane thought, but without speaking. "And we mustn't stand here listening to her telephoning. She doesn't realize we can hear."

But for all her instinctive good manners, Jane hadn't the hardihood to make the noise which would warn the old lady of listeners. For she had the foolish idea that at the first sound from the Blue Room Aunt Augusta would burst open the door and—what? Who knew? Jane was ready to expect anything in this house now. She had quite forgotten that the door was safely locked and the key in the little maid's pocket.

"Goshen, 1225 M? Very well. This is Miss Augusta Williams, speaking from Surfgate. I want Mr. Paul Wall on the telephone, and he must hurry. . . . What? He's at dinner? Well, what of it! He must leave his dinner. I'm his aunt, Miss Williams, speaking from Surfgate. . . . I thought so! . . . Well, Paul! Nice sort of servants they've got there at the Griffiths'! Now listen to me. I need you, and your sister needs you. Grace has gone and got a house party here for over the week-end, girls and boys, a lot of young savages. Nobody knows anything about any of them, except

one, Max Colt. The rest are just Grace's pick-ups. Well, I've lost a very valuable piece of jewelry right in the midst of 'em. . . . No. Of course not lost really. . . . I tell you I know. It's stolen. Didn't I tell you? . . . No use. Your sister won't lift a finger. She insists it's just mislaid and will come to light. Absurd. But you know her! . . . You're right. I'm not an alarmist. But this is a serious theft! You'll understand more when you're here and I can talk with you. Make your excuses and bring your suitcase. You'll have to stay the night. Hurry!"

Tingalingalingaling. She had rung off.

Jane and the little maid stood staring into each other's faces until the door into the hall the other side of the partition had opened and closed and Aunt Augusta's assured steps died away in the distance.

Then the little maid breathed, still not moving from her position in the exact center of the silver rug, "A theft! Oh, heavens!"

Jane was even more stunned than the little maid. The idea that any one should think that the bracelet had been *stolen* was totally new to her. But the realization that Paul Waul had

been called in, that he was really coming to join their house party—that was even more flabbergasting.

"I'll say, 'Oh, heavens!' " she echoed the little maid. But she did not tell all her thoughts.

CHAPTER V

ENTER THE DETECTIVE

THEN, after a minute of anxious indecision, Jane said for the second time, "Well, I must get dressed now."

But the little maid did not take it as a dismissal. "Let me help you," she begged. "Do let me."

And Jane, who, for some reason which she herself did not quite understand, did not like to be left alone in the Blue Room, welcomed the company and the help of the little maid. She lent only half an ear, however, to the other girl's chatter, for she was busy with her own thoughts. She shivered with the cold as she made her toilet, and she noticed that the little maid's hands were icy cold. A fire had been laid in the grate but it had not been lighted, and there was not furnace heat at Surfgate.

"This is the weirdest week-end, the weirdest house party, the weirdest house," Jane was saying to herself. "I think I'd better get into that

telephone booth, when I go downstairs, and telephone a telegram to Mother, collect, telling her for mercy's sake to wire me that I'm suddenly needed at home. I could go on the first train to-morrow."

Then she caught her breath. "Why, that's exactly what Max Colt himself was doing at the telephone! That was why he acted so vexed when Grace and I caught him coming out! He didn't want us to suspect. He's not nearly so sleepy as he looks, that boy!"

"You're awfully pretty," the little maid said, putting down Jane's hairbrush, and moving back halfway across the room to get the complete effect of Jane in her chiffon evening frock, the color of a new spring leaf, ivory silk stockings and ivory pumps, her short, curling hair bound with a wreath of gold flowers.

"Really?" Jane was pleased. Then with a chuckle she added, "Well, I'd better be, hadn't I?—in Mr. Paul Waul's honor, don't you know."

The little maid could not see that Jane was mocking. She scented a romance at once, and cried eagerly. "Oh, be sure, miss, he won't so much as look at those other girls. They can't hold a candle to you. I noticed most particu-

larly down in the drawing room, when I took Miss Williams her medicine. So you've known the young gentleman before now! He is certainly grand!"

"No! Never! Can't you see I was only fooling!" Jane flared, turning her back on the mirror. "I don't know him and I don't want to know him, not ever. But now I've got to, worse luck. Beryl was right. A sort of dreadful fate does seem to hang over this house. It's creepy and it's too weird!"

The face of the little maid had stiffened. Her eyes were saucer-like again. Jane was instantly repentant.

"Oh, don't look so scared," she begged. "I guess it's myself that's funny and not the house. I feel so jumpy—not like myself at all. I'm ever so grateful you stayed here and kept me company and helped me dress. What's your name? Mine's Jane Dyke."

"Mine's Nora Brady. And you're the sweetest, prettiest lady I ever waited on."

Well, there was something left in life, then, in spite of the drear chilliness, and the knowledge that there was to be no escaping Mr. Paul Waul, the tiresome, overpraised uncle of Grace.

Jane walked down the dim, drafty staircase

thinking more about that quaint little Nora Brady than about the mystery of the vanished bracelet or even the approaching meeting with the legendary young man.

To her disappointment there was no opportunity to tell Beryl before dinner about the overheard telephone conversation, for dinner, apparently, had been announced before she descended the staircase. The house party was gathered in the hall, at the very foot of the stairs, waiting for her. As soon as she came into view, Aunt Augusta uttered, her voice prickly as a burr with disapproval, "We were just about to go in to dinner without you, Miss Dyke."

"I suppose she expects me to take the remaining stairs in wild leaps," Jane thought. But she came on steadily, in the best Miss-Burk-taught manner of descending a staircase to dinner. Since she seemed destined to make Miss Williams furious no matter what she did, she might as well be thorough and artistic about it!

At the dinner table Jane looked around at her fellow guests curiously, wondering whether any of them realized that Aunt Augusta suspected one of them of being a common thief. Max Colt's sullen, sleepy glances, avoiding hers, told her nothing, nor Donald King's innocent bland-

ness. Sylvia Hunt-Smith, Jane could swear, was quite free of any thoughts whatever about anything whatever; she was all giggles and blushes over Cecil who sat beside her, busy with his usual horseplay. Beryl, just across the table from Jane, appeared at the moment more interested in food than anything else. She was eating with apparent appetite and relish, after her musical exertions. Jane could not catch her eye. Grace, who had managed to get herself seated on Jane's right hand, beamed with mild happiness in the sunshine of the presence of her admired schoolmate. Jane decided that Grace had entirely forgotten about the lost bracelet.

Besides Aunt Augusta, then, only one other person remained for Jane's speculation. That was Grace's mother, Mrs. Merriman. She sat at the head of the table, very gorgeous in a wine-colored velvet low-necked evening gown, pearls at her ears in place of the afternoon's jade, and pearls around her slim neck. Jane thought her rather startlingly pale, even in candlelight; and there were dark smudges under her eyes which certainly hadn't been there in the afternoon.

Mrs. Merriman caught Jane studying her, and smiled. If Miss Williams disliked her without reason, Jane was ready to believe that Mrs. Mer-

riman liked her without reason. Jane had felt Mrs. Merriman's approval and been warmed by it from the first instant. Now Mrs. Merriman leaned forward a little, over the table, and said for everyone, but looking mostly at Jane, "I was sorry to forsake you this afternoon as I did. But I am subject to horrid headaches, and unfortunately an attack was coming on just as you arrived. I went to my room and lay down."

"But you came back in time to hear Beryl playing," Jane stated. "Did that do your head good, Mrs. Merriman? Sometimes Beryl's music has actually cured a headache of mine."

Mrs. Merriman's face was not one to show surprise, or any of the more obvious emotions. It was almost Oriental in its ambiguity. She responded to Jane, quite without emphasis, "But, no, my dear. I didn't come back, or hear the piano at all. My room is quite at the other end of the house. Did Beryl play? How very nice. What made you think I heard, Jane?"

Jane gasped. "You didn't come back to the drawing room and stand by the piano for a few minutes?" she asked in a dazed voice.

"Why, no, you funny child. I was in my room with the door closed and my head in a

towel. But you look as though you had seen a ghost. Was it my ghost?"

Jane laughed and shrugged. "I did think I saw you standing there back of the piano," she said, embarrassed now, and troubled. "I certainly did see your Chinese shawl anyway. It caught the firelight. It was marvelous."

"But that's hardly possible, my dear," Mrs. Merriman said with quiet seriousness. Then she added, humor just touching the deep corners of her clever mouth, "My Chinese shawl is too well trained to go walking around without me in it. It was lying all the while, quite docilely, serving as a cover for me while I slept."

Everybody laughed politely at this whimsicality, and the conversation turned to football. But Jane did not join in it. She was a sensible, *commonsensible* girl—not like Beryl, given to dreams and imaginings. And she had seen that Chinese shawl! She could swear to it!

Aunt Augusta sat at the foot of the table. She spoke scarcely a word through the whole meal; and her head seemed cocked to one side a little, as though she were listening for some sound out in the hall. Jane supposed that she was listening for her nephew's entrance. She looked

across at Beryl and longed for some way of communicating telepathically with her chum. If Beryl could only guess at Paul Waul's approach, and the suspicion of theft hanging over all their heads, Jane surmised she would not be quite so taken up with her salad, be it ever so succulent.

Dinner finished, the house party surged eagerly across the chilly hall—bleak in contrast to the bright, warm dining room—toward the welcoming fires of the drawing room. But there was a sudden jam in the doorway. Jane heard a glad exclamation. It was Aunt Augusta, who, going ahead of everyone, had discovered her obedient nephew, there already, waiting on the farther hearthrug.

Mrs. Merriman's glad exclamations followed quickly on Aunt Augusta's. Jane went up on her toes to witness the scene. Then Grace, whose arm was linked in Jane's, broke loose, and pushed her way forward. "Why, you darling Paul!" she cried gleefully. "You did come, after all!"

Jane happened to catch one swift glimpse of Beryl's comically disgusted countenance, and then she was swept forward on the general tide and introduced with the others.

"I've heard of you, Jane Dyke," Paul Waul said to Jane briefly, as she stood, rather stiffly, for her introduction.

"And I have heard of you, Paul Waul," she responded in something of his own tone.

The young man grinned. "Do you imply," he suggested, "that that's enough for both of us?"

Jane couldn't help chuckling. Paul Waul was in every way so disarming. He was not at all the perfect and correct and handsome young man that Grace had some way managed to convey in her glowing descriptions, however. He was neither tall nor short, thin nor fat, handsome nor ugly. At first glance he appeared merely ordinary. But not when he spoke, and not when he returned one's first glance. Then one noticed that he had very keen, rather quizzical blue eyes and a whimsical, crooked mouth. His hair, clipped short, was crisp and brown, and seemed in some way to help express the general vigor of his personality. His hands, perhaps, were his best feature. They were clever-looking hands. But Jane had decided even before she noticed his hands, that he looked all over clever, just as his sister, Mrs. Merriman, did. Only, added to his cleverness,

there was a great deal of humor. It was the kind of humor that might not come out in words. It wasn't like Cecil's. It was content to look quietly out at one from the corners of his crooked mouth and his keen blue eyes.

Jane couldn't help it; all her preconceived ideas of this studious young man who scorned football evaporated.

"Why, he's nice! He's jolly! In spite of his silly name, and in spite of Grace!" she conceded to herself. "He's almost as nice as my brother Jim!"

She thought he was so nice, in fact, that she was actually sorry when Aunt Augusta appropriated the young man's society, taking him away from everyone to sit by her side on a sofa in front of one of the fires.

"Now she's telling him all about how one of us is a thief," Jane surmised. "I wonder what he'll make of it all!"

"Shall we have the phonograph to dance to?" Mrs. Merriman asked. "Or would you rather I played for you?"

"Oh, do play!" Grace urged her mother. "You make it so much jazzier than the phonograph ever can!"

This from mousy little Grace! Well, the

presence of her idolized young uncle had certainly brought out unusual vivacity!

And so they danced to Mrs. Merriman's very spirited playing. But to her surprise, Jane herself did not dance! The reason was simple. Nobody asked her to! For Jane this was a unique experience. Donald King had rushed over to Grace at the first note. Cecil put his arm about Sylvia as a matter of course, and they were pranking about the room more than dancing, but having a very good time of it. Max Colt had come to where Beryl and Jane were standing together, and without so much as a glance at Jane, had bowed low in a mock old-fashioned manner before Beryl, and now those two were dancing together beautifully, almost as expertly as though they were professional partners.

Jane drew a stool as close to the fire as she dared in her flimsy green draperies, and sat down on it, looking into the flames, pretending to herself that she didn't care. But she had had no previous practice in wall-flowering, and she felt awkward and dismayed too.

It was really too bad she had taken such pains to offend Max Colt in the afternoon. It wasn't very much fun having Paul Waul notice how

unpopular she was. And of course, Aunt Augusta might be imparting some of her own prejudice against Jane to him as well.

Out of the corner of her eye Jane could see that Aunt Augusta was doing every bit of the talking over there on the sofa. She noticed, also, Paul Waul exchanging amused glances over Aunt Augusta's head with his sister at the piano. That was at first. But very soon those glances turned anxious, serious. However, Mrs. Merriman, on her part, refused to be serious. Her playing grew more sparkling, her long white hands flashed back and forth over the keyboard with more and more sprightliness.

Then, suddenly, Jane realized that Paul Waul was looking in her own direction, questioningly, with great intentness. She stopped stealing glances herself out of the corner of her eye, and concentrated on the fire, trying to make her expression as unconscious as possible.

"Will you have coffee?"

Jane looked up, startled. A maid was standing over her with a tray of little cups. Already Aunt Augusta and Paul had been served; and now the others came over to Jane's fire, and Mrs. Merriman stopped playing.

Mr. Waul, leaving the sofa and his aunt, came

sauntering across the floor, bringing his cup with him. He set it down, untouched, however, above Jane's head on the mantel, and turning about, suddenly dominated the little group. The anxiety which Jane had last noticed in his eyes now seemed gone, and all the humor was back again when he put his hands deep into the pockets of his dinner jacket and drawled:

"All right, Mr. Pomeroy. You've had your little joke. But we're on now, and ready to laugh. Produce the jewelry."

Well, of course! Jane heaved a sigh of relief, and relaxed for the first time since the minute she had heard Aunt Augusta say over the telephone that the bracelet had certainly been stolen. She ought to have been clever enough to see for herself that the whole thing was only one of Cecil's silly jokes! Of course the bracelet hadn't been stolen. Such things don't happen. Why had Jane allowed herself for one minute to be affected by Aunt Augusta's idiotic suspicions! Well, Paul Waul had had more sense. Now they could all laugh.

But the laugh did not follow. Except Jane's! To her shock, her own quick chuckle had fallen on complete silence.

Cecil's jaw was dropped with what appeared

to be utter stupefaction. Then, he said, in rather a strangled voice, "What jewelry, Mr. Waul? What're you driving at?"

"That bracelet, of course. My aunt's missing bracelet." Mr. Waul rather snapped it out.

A brick-red slowly colored Cecil's good-natured face. "Whatcha mean?" he faltered. "I ain't seen no bracelet." Even in his obvious discomfort, Cecil could not forego a little joke with his mother tongue.

Mr. Waul was watching him very, very keenly. Then slowly he removed his scrutiny.

"Well, I'm glad I was mistaken, Mr. Pomeroy," he said, quietly. "And I beg your pardon for having suspected you. It would have been a joke in very bad taste, I grant you."

But Cecil would not let it stop there. He faced Mr. Waul, his face still red, and his eyes hot. "So that's what you're here for," he exclaimed angrily. "You're a detective, I bet, and not Mrs. Merriman's brother at all. A nice way to treat a decent house party! But why pick on me? If Miss Williams has you all primed in this business, you'll see that I'm the one person present you had no business to pick on. I couldn't have stolen the bracelet. Why, I never went near the piano the whole time. I

didn't budge from my chair over there. Ask any one."

But Mr. Waul did not take Cecil's challenge. Neither did he look at the chair toward which Cecil was pointing so excitedly. He said quietly:

"My dear fellow, I know exactly where you sat, and that you didn't budge all the while Miss Cosgrave was playing. But when the bracelet was missed, it was you, wasn't it, who were the first to look for it under the piano? You see, I figured that you pocketed it then, just for a practical joke. But now I entirely take your word that you didn't, and I apologize."

"You'd better apologize! That's not my idea of a joke, thank you, Mr. Waul!"

A very awkward silence followed angry rudeness while no one looked at any one else in particular. But, after an instant, Mr. Waul gathered himself together and spoke again, drawlingly and pleasantly, in a perfectly matter-of-fact way.

"Get it out of your heads that I'm a detective," he said. "I'm Mrs. Merriman's brother fast enough. Miss Williams, my aunt, got so worried about the loss of her valuable bracelet that she called me up and I left a house party I was

enjoying myself, to come over here and help straighten things out, if I could.

"For it's a pretty serious thing that has happened here. The bracelet that has been lost is of great value, almost priceless, in fact. Its loss, in the way it was lost, puts a grave obligation on everyone who was present to help all he or she can in its recovery. Probably only one of us all here, or under this roof, is guilty. All the remaining people are innocent. Well, that makes it absolutely necessary for the innocent ones to do all they can to discover and expose the guilty one. And nobody has any business to get mad. Unless, possibly, the one who's actually hiding the bracelet at this instant. It's up to the rest of us to keep cool and help. Isn't that so?"

It was Jane who answered. She nodded. "Of course we've got to help," she agreed. "And we ought to try not to get mad. Though it does make any decent person a little mad, naturally, to be suspected of stealing. It does look, though, as if Miss Williams's bracelet has been stolen. Only, I don't see, Mr. Waul, what makes you so certain it was one of us who stole it." Here Jane suddenly lowered her voice almost to a whisper, looking toward the door. "Two other

people came into the room and went out again while Beryl was playing."

Mr. Waul was looking at Jane with attention. "Yes, I know," he said. "Two of the servants were in and out, while Miss Cosgrave was playing. Morris, who stirred up the fires, however, did not go within reaching distance of the piano. So he is out of it. Nora Brady, my aunt's little maid, remains. Did any of you notice her actions in particular?"

CHAPTER VI

INQUISITION

WHY, yes. I noticed her actions quite particularly." It was Jane again. "It happened that I hardly took my eyes from her all the time she was in the room."

"Yes? Well, what did you notice? Anything peculiar?" Paul Waul was looking at Jane eagerly. She had his whole attention.

"No, nothing peculiar, except that she was embarrassed. Her face was quite red. She came in at the door and directly across the room, in front of me, to Miss Williams's chair. While she held the glass for Miss Williams to shake the powder in, she wasn't near enough to the piano to touch it. Then, when she stood back, almost against the piano, while Miss Williams drank the medicine, she kept her arms stiffly down at her sides, like a toy soldier. She didn't move a hand, I'm sure. I should say, from what I noticed, that Nora Brady couldn't have knocked the bracelet off or taken it."

"I must say you're a very noticing young per-

son!" Aunt Augusta had come over and was standing now on the hearth rug beside her nephew. "You even know my maid's name, Christian and sur! Most noticing!"

Jane was furious. She felt her cheeks go hot and she knew that her eyes were blazing. She was grateful that Paul Waul had turned away when she was halfway through her recital, and that he was not looking at her now. But he spoke to her without looking. He said, "Thank you, Miss Dyke. What you have said may prove very helpful. Yet, in spite of your opinion of the matter, we can't yet quite count little Nora out. Did any one else notice her so particularly as Miss Dyke noticed her while she was in the room this afternoon?"

But no one else had. The others seemed merely to be aware that Nora had come in, given Miss Williams her medicine, and gone out again.

"Now for another important question," Mr. Waul said when no more information about Nora's movements seemed to be forthcoming. "Did any of you here take notice of my aunt's bracelet at all, before it disappeared. Did you see it on her wrist earlier, or on the piano later? Did you see her take it off?"

Again it was Jane who answered. She was still furious, but she felt impelled to speak up and play the game. She leaned forward in her chair and in a rather shaking, low voice spoke:

"Yes. I noticed it. I noticed Miss Williams taking the bracelet off before she poured my tea. There was a broken cup there, and I thought the bracelet had probably knocked against the cup and broken it. She put the bracelet behind her, up on the piano. I looked at it for some little time, just stood looking. It was so beautiful!"

Jane could not understand the hush that fell on her last word. And neither could she understand why Mr. Waul made such a point of not looking at her.

But suddenly, and with such impetuosity that everyone jumped, Beryl left her place and rushed over to sit on the arm of Jane's chair.

"Jane isn't the only one who saw the bracelet and thought it was lovely. I saw it too," she cried in a voice husky with emotion. When Beryl was excited, the Irish in her accent was very pronounced. She was all Irish at this instant. Her gray eyes were starry, and her voice was edged with tears.

"I noticed it all the more, that bracelet," she went on explaining, "because I had seen it before. It was last summer, early in the summer, at Bar Harbor. Alfreda Waul was playing in the Building of Arts, and Father and I were in chairs they had crowded up on to the stage, the place was so packed. Alfreda Waul was wearing Miss Williams's bracelet then—or one exactly like it. Father said afterward that the jewels were probably very wonderful ones. That's why I couldn't keep away from the piano this afternoon, though no one asked me to play. It was the sight of that bracelet that set me off. But I didn't know until Mr. Waul just told us that the bracelet had been lost!"

"No. You were out of the room, Miss Cosgrave, you and Max both, when the bracelet was missed," Paul Waul bore her out. He certainly seemed to know everything!

When questioned individually the others said they had not seen the bracelet at all—that is not to notice it or remember it. Except Cecil. He did have a dim memory that Aunt Augusta had worn something with a lot of sparkle to it on her wrist, but not being interested in trinkets of that sort he had given it no real notice.

But at this point Mrs. Merriman came from the piano bench, where she had been sitting, merely a spectator until now.

"Really, Paul," she expostulated, "and really, Aunt Augusta, I think that this is too bad of you. You are going too far. It is treating Grace's guests outrageously. I can't understand how I have sat back and let it go on. I think we had better apologize to everyone most humbly, and then, if they have any heart for it, I'll play some more dance music for them."

Mr. Waul was frowning. "Something's got to be done about this thing, though," he protested. "We can't ignore the disappearance of a thing worth what that bracelet is worth."

"Why, no, of course not. Not ignore it. But if I may be allowed to make a suggestion—though you haven't asked me for suggestions, dear Paul—I suggest that Aunt Augusta have Nora searched and Nora's room. If it isn't found that way, we can sleep on it, and take up some intelligent course in the morning."

Max Colt spoke suavely, and for the first time since the discussion had begun, from the low chair where he was lounging. "Hear! Hear!" he said. "I quite agree with Mrs. Merriman in thinking that everything points to the maid."

Mr. Paul Waul looked down at Max, his eyes suddenly narrowed and so keen that it rather took Jane's breath. She thought him, at the minute, capable of pouncing on the lackadaisical young man. But after all, Paul did not speak or move, for the drawingroom door opened, and Morris stood there with a message.

"Mr. Colt is wanted on the telephone," he announced. "It is the Western Union, sir."

Max was gone only three or four minutes, but it seemed nearer ten to the group in the drawing room. They sat, looking at the fire, and saying very little. When Max finally did return, Mr. Waul greeted him with a question. "Well, Max," he asked. "Is it a summons home or back to school?"

Max smiled, a lazy smile. "Home," he replied shortly. "But because of the fix we're in here, I telephoned a wire back that I couldn't leave."

"Bravo," Mr. Waul said shortly. "You are a fellow of sense, it seems."

But Mrs. Merriman, who during Max's absence had put a record on the phonograph, beckoned to Max now and commanded, "Come, Max. Let's dance."

So the dancing began again. A stranger,

looking in at one of the long French windows, would have thought the house party a successful and gay affair.

But Jane Dyke and Paul Waul were left out of the gayety. At least, Jane was left out. Paul kept himself out. They sat, one on either side of the fireplace, looking into the flames. Aunt Augusta had left the room, presumably to question, and perhaps to search, poor little Nora Brady.

For a while, Jane rather expected Paul Waul to ask her to dance with him. When he said nothing about it, in fact, said nothing at all and seemed lost in his own thoughts, totally unaware of her presence there partnerless, she lost her patience quite. She decided to wake him up. Turning directly upon him, she spoke suddenly:

"I bet your aunt will be too late to find it if Nora Brady did take the bracelet. But that's all right. For, of course, she never did take it!"

Well, she had succeeded beyond her expectations. Mr. Paul Waul had startled into complete awareness of Jane.

"Why?" he asked. "Tell me why my aunt will be too late. What do you know about it?"

"Why, I only happen to know that Nora, if she is a thief, has had time enough to hide the

bracelet, or to run away herself. For she heard Miss Williams when she telephoned to you. We both of us heard every single word she said, through the partition."

"Well, can you beat it! Where were you and Nora, may I ask, when you overheard Miss Williams talking to me?"

"In my room. It's the Blue Room they've given me. Miss Williams telephoned from the sitting room next door."

"Hm! And, please, if you don't mind confiding in me, how did Nora happen to be in your room with you at that important minute?"

"Not at all. Why should I mind? She was there because Miss Williams had sent her to——"

But Jane had suddenly clapped her hands to her mouth. Too late she realized what she was doing. Nora hadn't wanted Miss Williams to know that she had put off locking the drawers and that door into the sitting room until that late hour. And now Jane was giving the poor little thing and her carelessness away. That was what she was doing!

"Oh, please, Mr. Waul," she begged now, "please forget all that I've said. Or at least

promise me that you'll never tell your aunt that Nora was in my room then. Promise?"

Paul Waul's face was a study. "But I don't understand," he protested. "This is too confusing. If what you say is true, then my aunt must know without anybody's telling her that Nora was in your room, since she herself sent her there."

"Yes, it seems so, of course. But I was wrong. At least, I was partly wrong. Perhaps Nora hadn't been sent. Oh dear! How stupid I am!"

Paul Waul laughed. "Oh, no, you're not stupid," he assured her. "You're the brightest person here. You've given me more information than any one else, except Aunt Augusta herself. I am very grateful. Haven't you something more to tell me, Jane Dyke?"

Jane rose, shaking out her green draperies. "Nothing more at all," she said, pretending to laugh herself, "except that I'm going to bed, if that interests you. Good-night."

Jane had not liked Paul Waul's tone at all. She had quite reversed her first opinion of him. He was every bit as dull and horrid as she had expected from Grace's descriptions. And this business of being a wallflower, while everybody else was dancing, was more than trying;

it was insupportable. She made up her excuses as she went toward Mrs. Merriman. She had to go to bed because she was tired. Well, that was true enough: she was tired of this house party and all the members of it.

"Grace had better take you up," Mrs. Merriman said, kindly. "I'm sorry you're feeling so tired, Jane. But in the morning everything will be nicer, I am sure."

So Mrs. Merriman had read her thoughts. But Grace was dancing at the far end of the room with Donald, and so absorbed in a new step which he was teaching her that she had not noticed Jane's movements. Jane slipped out alone, glad to escape Grace's attentions.

She shivered when she was in the hall. It was cold and drafty, dim and cheerless. And the great staircase loomed before her dark and almost threatening.

"This *is* a house!" Jane exclaimed to herself.

She went up the stairs slowly, her head bent, listening for a step behind her or ahead of her. She hoped she was alone, but had a dreadful sense that she wasn't.

When she reached the upper hall she heard rain slishing against the roof, and a blind banging somewhere. The music from the drawing

room sounded faint indeed. The dimly lighted hall ahead of her gave forth a series of creaks, exactly as though someone was walking toward her. But she could see no one, and of course what she couldn't see wasn't there.

All the same, her hand went suddenly to her thumping heart, and quite like a frightened little girl, green draperies floating about her on the cold air, she ran just as fast as she could down the shadowy spaces that separated her from the Blue Room.

CHAPTER VII

WIND FROM NOWHERE

TO HER surprise and pleasure she met warmth and light at the door of the Blue Room. Somebody cared about her after all and had her in mind. A fire was burning on her hearth, her bed was turned down and her slippers and dressing gown laid out. Nora Brady jumped up from the hearth rug, where she had been kneeling, nursing the blaze, and smiled at Jane.

"It's early you are, Miss Jane!" she cried, surprised. "I counted on getting it quite snug here before your bedtime. Are the others up? It's hardly turned nine."

"Oh, no. I came early. Miss Williams isn't down in the drawing room, though. Haven't you seen her? Oughtn't you to be doing her room, attending to her instead of me?"

"That's all right. She never needs me until eleven or so. Of course, I don't belong to be here, though, doing you. It's Nelly's job—the

guest rooms. But I asked to do the Blue Room to-night, and Nelly was agreeable. You see——"

But Jane interrupted the friendly little maid. "I'm sorry, Nora," she said, "But I'm afraid Miss Williams is really looking for you. She said she was going to—to—to look for you when she came up half an hour or so ago. It's funny you haven't seen her."

"Oh, I must run, then. But how could I know she'd be so early? She'll have no call to be blaming me, though, and me never knowing. So I'll say good-night, miss, and good-bye as well. For I mayn't ever be seeing you again."

Jane laughed. "Why, Nora, I shall be here all to-morrow and the next day, you know. Do come in again, Nora. You're a very great comfort to me."

Nora twisted at a corner of her speck of an apron, her head dropped. "It's sweet you are to be saying such things to me, miss, and inviting me. But all the same it's good-bye. I can't stop to say more, with Miss Williams waiting for me, but I'm making to be off and away from this house to-morrow at dawn."

Jane sank down on to the side of her bed, her

arms dropped stiffly at her sides, her face amazed.

"Making to be off and away at dawn tomorrow, Nora Brady!" she ejaculated. "Oh, you can't! You mustn't! They'd think—they'd say——"

But after all, Jane really had no business to be warning Nora and telling her how she was suspected by some—by Max Colt at least, and possibly Mrs. Merriman—of having stolen the bracelet. No, she had no business to warn her. But even so, Jane, after the first shock of Nora's information about being off in the morning, had no real suspicions of the little maid herself. Thieves and criminals have never kind, open faces like Nora!

Nora stopped at the middle of the Blue Room's three windows before she finally went out, and leaned there on the sill, pressing her face against the pane.

"It's a black night," she told Jane. "It's fortunate you are, not to be hearing the sea here. It will be racketing something terrible by now. You've got the quietest room for sleeping in the whole house. You'll not hear the wind nor nothing."

"Nora! Well, I never!"

Nora wheeled about from the window, and Jane turned her head toward the door. There stood Aunt Augusta, looking the personification of amazed disgust. But she did not say another word. She merely lifted her hand and with one lean, commanding finger beckoned to her maid. Then she turned and went away from the door. Nora followed her mistress, her head dropped, wringing her diminutive apron. But just as Nora, too, was to vanish from the door, Jane suddenly *hissed* softly to attract her attention, and when the little maid looked back, she blew her a kiss. Nora smiled at that through her tears.

Then Jane sat, statue-like, while the footsteps of mistress and maid grew fainter and fainter away down the long hall, and finally died away altogether.

When only the silence was left, Jane rose and went softly to the door, intending to turn the key. But, to her discomfort, there was no key and no bolt. The keyhole gaped empty.

"Well, there's no help for it!" she said to herself, with a philosophical shrug. "If Aunt Augusta takes it into her head to pounce in here in the middle of my undressing, she'll have to pounce. I suppose she's searching Nora by

now. But if she finds that that nice little thing has anything to do with the bracelet, I'll be the most surprised girl alive."

Jane was very quick with her preparations for the night. The very last thing, she put the screen around the fire and opened all three windows. Then she ran across the silver rug in her bare feet and leapt into bed.

It was a truly magnificent bed, the Blue Room's. It was very wide and soft, and there were richly carved head- and foot-pieces of ebony. Jane found the exact center of the luxurious mattress, and curled down there, a blue satin eiderdown drawn up to her chin. It was deliciously snug and comforting. Cool, cold air from the windows soon found her face, but, as Nora had promised, there was no wind, no draft. And she hardly heard the rain.

The flickering flames of the screened fire stroked the darkness with friendliness. The long afternoon's drive in the wind, and after that the good dinner and the open fires—all had combined to make Jane healthily sleepy. And now, before she had had time for many thoughts, even of comfort, she fell into a sleep too deep for dreaming.

What woke her she did not know. But sud-

denly she was wide awake, lying on her back, the eiderdown still up to her chin, her eyes wide open, her spine stiff with shock.

What had happened? What had waked her? Where was her firelight? How long had she been asleep? Had she been asleep at all? Were the others downstairs still dancing, or had they come up? Perhaps someone had knocked on her door. What time was it?

She sat up, feeling for her night lamp. But her hand, wavering about in the blackness, did not find the lamp. She must be trying at the wrong side of the bed. She felt quite turned about. So she tried the other hand and the other side, but with no success.

And then a noise broke through the darkness. Her door was opening. She heard the squeak of its hinges. She had no doubt that it was her door. Simultaneously she waved both arms now, trying on both sides for the night lamp. She simply must have light.

There came a soft thud. That was her door, meeting the wall. So it stood open all the way now, wide! But no light shone in from the hall. The hall lights were quite out, then. So it must be very late, the dance over and everyone in bed.

With the opening of the door a great commo-

tion had set itself up in the Blue Room. The window shades rattled. A paper from somewhere rustled about the floor. Then Jane's short curls were tossing in a damp wind! And she heard the sea! Heavy surf! The surf was so loud and so near that she thought, actually, it must be pounding against the high carved footboard of her bed!

Jane leaned forward, staring into the windy darkness until her eyeballs ached. But she could see nothing, not even the outlines of the windows, or the door which she was sure was standing wide. She was certain, however, that the wind was not blowing through the windows. The windows were on the left side of her bed. (She remembered that distinctly.) And this wind, and the noise of surf, were coming from the right, from the door which was open.

She recalled that the door had not been locked when she came to bed. But it was firmly latched. Firmly latched doors do not come open of themselves. Jane was very much frightened.

"Who's there? Who came in?" she whispered huskily through the windy commotion.

But no one answered.

Then, in a rush, Jane remembered about the

lost bracelet. It had been stolen. People who steal jewels do other things, more dreadful. Horrible crimes have been committed for jewels always. Perhaps Aunt Augusta had other beautiful and priceless gems, and perhaps the thief had come for them now, to add them to the bracelet. He would think that Aunt Augusta was sleeping here, of course, in her own Blue Room.

They had all been very foolish, a little mad, to imagine that any member of the house party could do such a thing, or little Nora. A real criminal was wandering about in Surfgate, lurking in its dark corners, waiting for opportunities for crime. He had been in the drawing room, sneaking, crawling in the dark shadows, from shadow to shadow. It had taken him but a flashing instant to snatch the bracelet from the piano. He was still creeping, crawling, crouching . . .

He was creeping toward her bed at this very instant. He must be. Did Aunt Augusta go to bed with her diamonds about her neck? She had worn diamonds for dinner. What a person she was for precious stones!

Jane was sweeping her arms in circles, desperate for the light.

Then, as abruptly as the noise of the wind and the surf had begun, just so abruptly it ceased. The window shades and the rustling paper fell into silence. Her curls lay quiet on her brow and on her neck. The silence was complete. But to Jane, this sudden, unreasonable silence was more eerie than all the noise had been.

She gave up trying for the night lamp and considered shrieking. The only thing that kept her from doing that was the sudden memory of Paul Waul's quizzical blue eyes. She couldn't give him a chance to come rushing at her cries to find her in hysterics because a door had blown open with the wind.

In another second she was devoutly grateful for her restraint. A light had softly blossomed in the hall. Her wide-open door was a soft block of light.

Criminals don't go about turning on lights.

She could see her bedside lamp now all right, and she had to smile. Reason enough that she had missed it, waving her arms about like that. She had quite forgotten the unusual width of the great bed, and that she had gone to sleep in its exact center. No one could reach the bedside lamp from the center of that giant bed.

She crawled over on her knees and turned on

her light now. There was no one in her room. Her breath came calmer and calmer, but her body still shook a bit.

She looked at her wrist watch, which she had placed on the bedside table, under the light. It had stopped at ten o'clock. She had forgotten to wind it in her haste to get into bed, but she did not remember that now. She merely wondered at its stopping, and was disappointed not to know the time. But she felt that it was still early, earlier than midnight, at least. They might be dancing down in the drawing room, or playing games. People don't go around turning on lights in the middle of the night. What a goose she had been to come sulking to bed on a Friday night when one might stay up as late as one wished. She certainly felt as fresh as a daisy and ready for anything. Well, it might not be too late, even now to get some real enjoyment out of this Friday night.

Jane jumped out of bed and, humming a tune under her breath, dressed herself afresh—"tore into her clothes"— was her expression for it.

CHAPTER VIII

EYES IN THE DARK

BUT when Jane got into the hall she stopped, "dashed." There was no sign of life there and no sounds came up from the drawing room. Even the lights were out, up here at least, except the single light that *someone* had switched on a minute ago near the Blue Room's door. Jane wondered now, more than ever, who that person had been.

She forgot her desire to rejoin the party, if indeed it were still in progress. Wonder absorbed her mind. She began to think again about that sound of wind and surf. She felt that it was rather imposed upon her now to discover how all that strangeness had been possible.

Her first idea, of course, was the obvious one that there must be a window somewhere out here in the hall—a window which for some unknown reason had suddenly been opened, and then after a few moments as suddenly closed. The window must be on the sea side of the hall, the op-

posite side from her door. But standing there, under the one light, and looking hard into the shadows, she could discern no such window. The entire length of the opposite wall offered only a paneled surface, broken up by a few huge tapestries. One of these tapestries was directly opposite Jane's door.

Jane stood, then, completely at a loss to account for the wind that had blown her door open. Why, it was real, that wind, and no dream. It had tossed the curls on Jane's head, actually as though she were out in a storm! And that wind had never come in at her own windows. In the first place, it had not come from their direction at all. But even if, in the dark, she had made a mistake and misjudged of that, still it would be just as mysterious; for a wind certainly isn't apt to begin blowing with such complete suddenness and then stop with as complete suddenness; besides, there was that sound of the surf. More than that, if the wind had really, after all, come in at her windows, and then stopped blowing, the sound of the surf, which she had heard, would have increased in volume as the wind died. This was only reason.

But not only had the sound of the surf failed to grow louder when the wind stopped—it had

died out altogether; or rather it had been shut out, as though by a heavy door. Jane decided to explore that tapestry opposite, and the others too. There might be a window or a door concealed behind one of them. But she was shivering with the cold. She turned back into her room for a wrap to cover her bare arms and neck. She grabbed up the first thing she saw, her dressing gown which had been thrown across the foot board of her bed. It was a scarlet velvet gown, edged about the neck, sleeves and bottom with soft, black fur. This she dragged on over her green party frock and was instantly comforted by its coziness.

Then she went out and across to the tapestry. She hesitated an instant, but soon, gathering her courage, lifted it by one heavy corner. Dust fell about her head, making her sneeze. But there was no door or window visible behind the tapestry. Besides, the fact of the dust, Jane reasoned, indicated that the tapestry was ordinarily left undisturbed.

But if the wind and the noise of surf hadn't come in through some opening in the wall opposite the Blue Room door, how had it come in? Here was a mystery to match the mystery of the stolen bracelet.

Jane, very much awake after her nap, was ready for mystery, however. For isn't mystery, if one starts out to solve it, the gateway to adventure? Jane realized at last that she was in the way of adventures here at Surfgate. Instead of proving dull, as she had expected, the house party was truly rather lively. Or so Jane thought at last, wrapped warmly and snugly in her very comfortable dressing gown, refreshed by sleep, standing alone there in the shadowy hall.

But adventure, to have true zest, needs companionship. Jane wished she knew what time it was. She took it into her head to steal out to the top of the stairs and listen for music from the drawing room. If they were still dancing down there, she would get Beryl for a companion in the adventure. In her new mood she would not let Paul Waul spoil things for her.

Very softly, on her toes, she went out along the hall. The great front stairs led down into a huge well of darkness. A dim night light was burning somewhere out in that darkness, just a point. And everything was perfectly still.

So Jane realized that it must be very late indeed, perhaps early morning. She must have

been dreadfully deep asleep not to have heard them coming up to bed.

And then she started, and stood stiller than she had been standing, leaning against the banister. A door almost at her shoulder had opened on a crack, a door of one of the bedrooms. Light came through it, a pink, glowing light, as though it shone through rose silk. So somebody was still up.

A face appeared at the door crack. And after an instant the door was pushed farther open and a head peered cautiously out. The face was looking up the hall toward Jane's door. Then it turned, slowly, and its eyes met Jane's eyes, there, close at hand. It was Beryl.

With a little glad cry, Jane stepped toward her. Here was luck indeed.

Beryl, however, apparently did not agree with this sentiment. Not a bit. She gasped, and as though frightened, drew back, closing her door squarely in the face of her chum.

Well, this was too much! Jane thought Beryl couldn't have realized that it was herself, Jane. After an instant's hesitation she knocked lightly on the unfriendly door.

But Beryl did not answer. Then Jane put her

mouth to the keyhole and whispered distinctly, "It's only Jane. Open the door, Beryl. It's only Jane."

But there was no movement inside toward opening the door. Not a sound came from Beryl's bedroom. Jane knocked louder and whispered louder. There was no response. She was, in her own term for it, flabbergasted. Indeed, she was so flabbergasted that it made her rather weak in the knees. She sank down on the top stair, and elbows on knees, chin in hand, gave herself up to speculation about this third and, to her mind, strangest mystery. What was the matter with Beryl? What had got into her? To treat a chum like that!

Jane was very lonely. She had never been made to feel so lonely in her life. She wished that Jim, her brother, were here. They'd get, between them, some fun and excitement out of all this mystery. They'd turn detectives and make an adventure out of this night's happenings. She chuckled to herself as she thought how delighted Jim was going to be when she recounted the events of this house party to him. She'd make it just as dramatic as she could, the whole thing. But how very dramatic it could be, and how much more fun, if Jane herself, instead of

that horrid Paul Waul, could be the successful detective!

On the spot she decided that that was the way the story was to go. She would set all her wits to work on it. She would throw herself into this adventure alone, since Beryl had turned against her, or was afraid of her. She would stop being a scare-cat, afraid of the wind and creaking doors. She would *act.*

The first thing to be done, if one were serious in this detective business, was to go to the scene of the crime. Down in the drawing room, sitting where she had been sitting when the theft took place, she would have a clearer picture of the things that had happened there and the things that might have happened.

Wrapping her scarlet dressing gown more snugly about her, she crept down the stairs. The dim night light, burning over the big front door, showed her that the drawing room door was shut. She wondered whether she would be able to find the electric switch in the dark in there. But the minute she had the door open she was relieved. Fires were crackling in both fireplaces, well screened. So it couldn't be so late as she had come to think. Those birch logs had been almost freshly put on.

She decided that the blazing fires gave approximately as much light as they had had there while Beryl played in the afternoon. That ought to be a help to her in the work she had set herself. So she did not even look about for the electric light switch.

Over in the corner about the piano nothing had been moved since the tea hour. All the dancing had taken place this side of it. This was a decided advantage.

In spite of the leaping shadows in the room and the queer light cast by the blazing fires, Jane was not the least bit nervous. For she did not feel alone any more. Brother Jim was with her, an imaginary audience. If a human form lurked anywhere in the many dark patches in the room, it was his. She was on the lighted stage, and he was there in the shadows watching and ready to applaud when she succeeded in what she had undertaken.

That is how it happened that Jane's movements were studied, and more than a little theatrical, when she sat herself down in the identical chair she had occupied during that mysterious hour when the bracelet had vanished. She put her elbows on its arms, and sank her

chin on her lightly folded hands—all in a way which she trusted was duly impressive. But first, she had ruffled her already plentifully ruffled curls, and narrowed her eyes. She hoped she looked like a detective.

She would begin the work with Sylvia. Sylvia, so far, had not occurred to her as the possible thief. But any one who knows anything at all about these matters knows that it is precisely the most innocent in appearance who is to be watched and considered most carefully.

And now Jane did remember that Sylvia, during the music, had been restless. She was not satisfied with her first choice of a chair, but had changed her place at least three times. In the beginning, she had been beside Aunt Augusta. Then she had moved to the arm of Jane's own chair. At the time Jane had been slightly annoyed; for she hated anybody's getting too close to her. Sylvia may have sensed this annoyance, for, after a minute or two, she went to sit on a cushion on the floor not far from Jane's feet.

But in spite of her ruffled curls, and her very much narrowed eyelids, Jane could not be sure whether, in making these changes, Sylvia had at any time been within touching distance of

that bracelet. She rather thought she had not. But she would keep all this in mind in her final accounting.

Max Colt came next. He was a friend of the family. Did this let him out? No, not at all. Not after the first thoughts about it. Since he knew the family and had been at Surfgate before, it was very probable that he had known about the bracelet for some time, how very valuable it was. And certainly no one could say that he had not had a chance to slip the bracelet into his pocket if he had cared to. When he stood by the piano for that minute, watching Beryl play, the bracelet must have lain midway between his elbows—that is, if it had not been stolen before that time. His back had been between the bracelet and the people in the room.

Then there were his actions afterward. What had he done? Just exactly what one would expect him to do if the bracelet were actually in his pocket. He had got out of the room as quietly as he could and telephoned a telegram to his home asking for a wire in return calling him there. No wonder he was cross when Grace and Jane came upon him at the very door of the booth. Jane wondered whether he had hidden the bracelet before or after he went to the tele-

phone. Probably he had hidden it before, to be on the safe side. Where would he be apt to have hidden it?

But this was going too fast. Jane pulled herself up. No good detective would let himself go so fast.

It was Cecil's turn. But she spent little time on Cecil. It was true, as Paul Waul had pointed out, he had had his chance to pocket the bracelet when he got down under the piano to look for it, supposing it had been knocked off on to the floor. But his surprised face when Paul Waul questioned him, and his sincere denials, even his anger, were very convincing to Jane. She felt that Cecil was certainly innocent.

But Donald King! She had quite forgotten him. He was the sort of person one does forget —like Grace. Jane chuckled aloud, dropping her rôle for an instant, at the idea of such a minus personality's being the center of such a dramatic situation. But the chuckle broke off in the middle as she suddenly remembered that he had sat all the while in that chintz-covered chair over there, one of its arms very near the piano. Was it within arm's reach of the bracelet? She couldn't be certain, but it looked so.

She got up and went over to the piano. It

would be easy to satisfy her mind about that. She tried to place herself in Donald's chair as she remembered him sitting, his profile to the room, lounging back, nursing his knee. If he had turned so, ever so little, using his shoulder as a screen, could he have reached——

But Jane's fingers never got so far as the place where the bracelet had been on the piano. A creaking board, and the distinct sound of a breath drawn somewhere on her left, stayed her movement. She suspended her own breath the better to listen. It did not come again. But she was absolutely certain now that she was not alone in this big shadowy room. She had more of an audience than her ghostly, imaginary brother Jim. She was being watched. She was sure of eyes on the back of her head.

CHAPTER IX

BY FIRELIGHT

NOW the fright that she had experienced upstairs a little while ago in the Blue Room returned. It is the unknown that is terrifying. And the unknown was behind her, at her left shoulder, looking at her, invisible itself because of a patch of black shadow thrown by a massive piece of furniture, an antique Spanish chest of drawers. It was from that patch of shadow the sound of a breath had come, and the creek of a board.

Jane clenched her hands. Her eyes were no longer narrowed and speculative. They were wide, black. She dared not turn her head.

But that state of things couldn't go on forever. Jane soon reached the breaking point of suspense endurance. She rose to her feet, swung about, facing that shadow, and cried softly, "Who is there? Who?"

Something moved. The firelight picked out

a face. A man rose slowly out of a deep chair and moved toward her. It was Mr. Paul Waul.

Jane's relief was mingled with exasperation. "So it's only you," she remarked. "What are you doing here?"

He looked taken aback by the question. But he replied suavely, "Yes, it's only I. And I am here in my unpleasant capacity of detective. . . . And you?"

Jane chuckled. She forgave his having frightened her so. "I too," she confided in a mock whisper. "I'm detecting too. I begin my work at the scene of the crime, you see. Our methods are the same."

But Mr. Waul would not play. He refused to enter into the spirit of the thing. He said rather coldly, without the hint of a smile, "Really, Miss Dyke, this business is no laughing matter. Let's be very quiet and talk softly. We don't want any one coming in to bother us. Do you realize that this situation is a case for the police, not for me? I'm not acting as detective for fun, I can tell you. And here you——"

Jane interrupted. "Yes, I suppose it is serious enough for the police, if the bracelet was really stolen. But since the police aren't here and you and I are——"

"You and I are? Your idea is that we join forces? That I help you?"

Mr. Waul, asking the question, had pulled up a chair near to Jane's, turned it wrong end about, and sat astride of it now, facing her.

"He's like an actor in the first act of a play. They always sit that way at critical moments," Jane thought to herself and chuckled again. She said: "Help *each other.* Let's!"

She couldn't see why her laughing should bother him so. There was a distinct frown, a deep line, perpendicular, between his eyes. His firelit face seemed oddly stern.

"I say," he drawled, "since we are both in the same business, the detective business—as one professional to another, do you mind telling me the results of your investigation up to the present moment?"

Jane hesitated only for a second. After all, it would be cozier to work with someone—even with Paul Waul—than alone. Coöperation, while it would lessen her personal glory when the time came to tell the adventure to Jim, might still heighten and hasten the action.

"Yes, I'll tell you everything," she agreed. "Though there's not very much so far. But it

begins with another mystery. A mystery just as strange as the bracelet mystery."

Then she told him about her sudden waking in the Blue Room, her door opening, the wind in her hair, and the sound of the surf. But she did not tell him the third mystery, Beryl's queer actions. To tell that would hurt her own pride too much. "And I had just come to Donald King," she finished, "when you squeaked and breathed and scared me almost out of my wits. Could he or couldn't he have reached the bracelet from here?"

She returned to the interrupted test as she spoke, turning her shoulder again, and reaching out toward the piano—the motion Paul Waul had interrupted. "Yes, if his arm is as long as mine he could have managed. Don't you think yourself, Mr. Paul, that Donald's arm is probably as long as mine, or even longer? But even so, he'd have to reach quite a lot, you see, and wouldn't somebody have noticed that and remembered it? Wouldn't I have noticed where I was sitting? I think I would."

Mr. Waul, not taking his eyes from Jane's eyes, agreed with her that Donald's having got possession of the bracelet in that way was rather unlikely. He would have been detected.

"Besides, we must consider his character," he pointed out. "He doesn't seem like the sort of person to carry out a thing like this bracelet robbery, does he?"

Jane shook her head emphatically. "No, indeed! That's why I was laughing."

Mr. Waul fell into a speculative silence, but he did not take his eyes from Jane's face. She returned his gaze expectantly. Now it was his turn to recount his work on this mystifying case. She ruffled her curls again—they were ever so ruffled by now—and asked in the tone of a partner:

"Well, Mr. Waul, have you any ideas? I've told you all mine so far."

"Ideas? Oh, yes. Plenty." He frowned. "But nothing absolutely definite—only just enough to go ahead on. I think I know who took the bracelet and who knows where it is at this instant. It's the *motive* I'm bothering about now. It doesn't seem possible that the person whom I suspect could have the ordinary motive of greed. That is absurd. There is something else—more in it than that. But I do think it is a mean shame to upset Miss Williams like this. It is heartless to badger an old woman."

"So you think it's only to tease Miss Wil-

liams? But who ever'd do such a thing? Cecil?"

"Oh, no. Not Cecil. I am practically certain we can count him out."

"So am I. Who then?"

Paul Waul refrained so long from answering this simple question that Jane became nettled.

"You're going to tell me whom you suspect, aren't you?" she insisted.

But Paul shook his head. He looked away toward the fire. "No, I am not going to tell you," he said in a low, but firm tone. "Wouldn't it be better for you to tell me, Miss Dyke?"

"Not tell me!" Jane was amazed, too amazed just at first for anger. "After I've told you every single thing! You're a funny kind of partner!"

To her increased amazement, he leaned suddenly forward and took both her hands in his. At this close range, even in the firelight, she noticed that he was rather pale. His expression was worried.

"I'll tell you this much, Jane Dyke," he whispered earnestly, "and I wish you'd take it to heart: My aunt Miss Williams, has the makings of a pretty fair detective herself, better than you or me. And if it were I who were playing this

joke, I'd give up the game this instant, admit I'd only been teasing, and return the bracelet before she goes to sleep. So far, my sister and I have kept the police out of it, but to-morrow, unless it's cleared up before then, I'm not sure we'll be able to hold out. She's a strong-minded old lady. And if the thing waits for the police and they discover the joker—you yourself must see it will be pretty unpleasant for somebody and somebody's family. Besides, all this is spoiling Grace's party. . . . What do you think?"

Jane sprang to her feet, wrenching her hands from his. She was tall and slim and looked older than she was in her long scarlet robe, in spite of her tangled curls.

"What do I think? Why, naturally, I think it is splendid advice if someone *is* trying to be funny. But why not give your advice to the person himself—that is, if you really *have* any idea who it is. I'm off to bed. Good-night."

Jane had not troubled to keep her voice low, she was so indignant.

He reached for her long loose sleeve to detain her. "Don't you think——" he began. But she backed quickly away, evading his grasp.

"I certainly do think," she said scornfully.

"I think a lot. And one of the things I think is that you haven't been honest. You let me believe we were going into this thing together. I was going to help you and you were going to help me. It was a sort of a partnership. It would have been fun, too—awfully jolly. And between us we might have unravelled something out of the tangle. But after this I shall keep what I think to myself, as you keep what you think to yourself. And we'll just see which of us two is the better detective!"

The last words she fairly shouted back from the door. Then she dashed for the dark staircase.

Safe up in the Blue Room before turning out her light for the second time this night, Jane pushed several chairs and one rather heavy table hard against her door.

"Now, if the wind or the ocean wants to come in, I'll be warned, anyway," she promised herself.

Her last thoughts, as she finally snuggled down for a second nap under the blue satin eiderdown were about equally divided between the queer action of her old chum, Beryl, and her new enemy, Paul Waul. They were about one third thoughts of vexation and hurt, and two thirds bewilderment.

CHAPTER X

SURFGATE'S GENIE

WHEN, at the sound of the rising bell, she woke the next morning, Jane, for the first time since her feet had crossed Surgfate's threshold, was her self-confident self again.

"The lost bracelet, that wind from nowhere, and Beryl's behavior at her door last night, all are mysteries," she said to herself. "They may be separate mysteries, or they may have a connection. I have a feeling that there is a connection. And I have an even stronger feeling that I'm going to beat that insufferable Paul Waul in the solution."

She jumped out of bed, glowing with enterprise and determination.

But as she sat before her mirror and put her brush against her tangled curls for its first strong stroke, she stopped in that position, gazing wide-eyed, though unseeing, at her image in the glass. For a memory, something like a moving picture in the way it was unrolling, had her

complete attention. It was a memory of how her friend Beryl, when she finished playing so suddenly yesterday afternoon, had reached her hand up and along the piano for the handkerchief which she had placed there when she sat down to play. Suppose the bracelet were still on the piano—had not vanished before that movement of Beryl's—it would have been more than easy for Beryl to have taken the bracelet along with the handkerchief.

But Beryl! To add Beryl to the list of suspects! It seemed absurd. However, nothing can be too absurd for a real detective. He must overlook nothing. But it was impossible to imagine that Beryl could have taken the bracelet from any ordinary motives. For Beryl would be untouched by the bracelet's monetary value, since she was notoriously indifferent to money, and this in spite of the fact that she was an heiress in her own right with an overindulgent widowed father.

Besides, she was Beryl! Jane had known her for years. She was the same sort of girl Jane herself was, with the same sort of background and ideas. No, not quite the same ideas, perhaps. For Beryl was sentimental. Her sentimentality might have furnished the motive, if

she had taken that bracelet. She had told them last night that she had seen the same bracelet on Alfreda Waul's wrist when she played in the Bar Harbor Arts Building. The very sight of the bracelet, with its memories, had stirred her so much that she had fallen into one of her moods when she herself had to play, whether or no.

Had Beryl snatched the bracelet for a keepsake, as it lay so conveniently near her handkerchief? And then later, when Paul Waul had talked to them all about it, did she realize for the first time that she had really stolen, and was she too scared to own up?

Jane felt that here she might at last have some sort of clue to go on. But in the light of how her best friend in all the world might be involved by her efforts, she wished, almost, that she had never set herself up for a detective.

Deep thought along with one's morning toilet does not make for speed, and Jane was the last of the guests to come into the dining room. That is, she was the last of those who appeared that morning for breakfast. Beryl and Miss Williams did not come down at all.

When they were all seated, busy with their grapefruit, Mrs. Merriman remarked, " My

aunt is breakfasting in bed this morning, but I wonder what's keeping Beryl."

At the end of the cereal course, Mrs. Merriman sent one of the maids, who was serving, to see whether Miss Cosgrave had slept well and whether she was coming down for breakfast. The maid returned with the message that Beryl was very well, thank you, and might she have some toast and chocolate in her room, as she had overslept and would be down too late for breakfast.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" Jane groaned to herself, hearing this. "What shall I ever do to help her out of this scrape if she's really in it and has got that old bracelet?"

Jane's chair was next to Paul Waul's at the table. She glanced sidewise at him now, suddenly wondering if Beryl was the person he had suspected last night and had not wanted to tell her because Beryl was her best friend. She realized that he was taking great pains to avoid her eyes, and in a spirit of teasing and contrariness she made him look at her.

"That's not like Beryl," she said softly, just to his ear. "It sounds spoiled and horrid. But she's not. She must have a headache. There's some real excuse, I am sure."

He answered, "Yes? Well, it is you yourself, Jane, we might have expected to oversleep this morning, considering the hour you went to bed."

Jane was interested. "What time was it, really?" she asked. "You see, my watch had stopped. Midnight?"

"Midnight! It was nearer three in the morning!"

"Not truly! But you were up!"

"Yes. I certainly was. You don't seem to grasp the fact, Miss Dyke" (he had called her Jane a minte ago) "that I am worried about this business. It's gone beyond a joke."

Jane thought of Beryl. "I'm worried too," she said, quite earnestly. He turned at that, and looked her full in the face in an eager, glad way she did not understand. And at that instant the maid, who was passing the rolls, jogged Jane's elbow ever so gently and flipped a tightly folded bit of paper into her lap.

Paul Waul saw the motion and the paper. When the maid had gone on he said quietly, "Don't bother about me. That's probably something pretty important. Better read it."

"Oh, do you think it's a note?"

"What else?"

The maid had apparently thought herself

very sly in the way she got the paper into Jane's lap. Secrecy was intended, obviously. So it was with some care that no one else at the table besides Paul should realize that she had a note that Jane unfolded the bit of paper and read:

DEAR MISS DYKE, I'm locked in the turret room be careful because Miss Williams is next it don't let her hear. Great trouble come if you can Miss Dyke and are not afraid of HER. lovingly,

NORA.

Well, here was adventure, melodrama, if you like! Miss Williams must have found the bracelet, then, in poor little Nora's possession. Jane was very sorry. Jane looked up from her note to Paul, who was watching her.

"Has the bracelet been found?" she asked. "Why didn't you tell me?"

She had spoken to Paul, but a silence had fallen over the breakfast table, the way silences do unaccountably happen in the midst of general chatter, and everyone heard Jane's question. It was Mrs. Merriman, not Paul, who answered.

"Oh, no," she said. "The bracelet has not turned up. It is very mysterious. My aunt and I have just been talking it over, before I came down. It seems wise to suggest that all of us keep to the house this morning. It is raining

and dreary outside, anyway, so it won't so much matter. We aren't giving this thing to the police, not yet. We have some clues to go on. Good ones. We expect, before the day is over, to have found the bracelet. So let's all make the best of it. Indeed, there's nothing else we can do."

The girls and boys sat silent, rather stunned. The seriousness of the situation appeared to most of them in its real light now for the first time.

"You mean we can't go out of doors?" Max Colt asked, looking restively toward the dining-room windows with the rain drizzling down their panes. "I particularly like tramping about in the rain."

"Sorry, Max." It was Paul Waul speaking. "No exceptions to this rule to-day. The servants, the guests, and the family—we're all included. It's better, anyway, than having the police in, don't you think?"

In spite of Jane's anxious concern for Beryl, and her excitement over Nora's desperate note, she had not lost her appetite. She finished her cereal, accepted a poached egg and some bacon, and had a second cup of coffee and hot milk.

But all the while she was thinking. How she

wished that Paul had played fair last night; then she would be able to show Nora's note to him now and find out whether he knew that Nora had been locked up, and if so, why. She decided that she must go to Nora first, and directly after that to Beryl. She would tell Beryl all that had just been said, and give her a chance to confide in her, Jane, and ask for help, supposing she really was involved with the bracelet. Surfgate was a huge place, however, and Jane would need directing to the Turret Room.

As they rose from the table, Jane asked Paul Waul, casually, "Is there a room here called the 'Turret Room'?"

"Yes, certainly," he replied. "Two of them. On clear days you get a wonderful view from the turret. But they're occupied now, my aunt in one, her maid in the other. And anyway, it's so dark to-day, you wouldn't see anything."

Jane decided to be frank with him to some extent. "That note was from Nora," she confided. "She wants to see me. How do I get there?"

Paul Waul stood looking at her, the perpendicular line between his eyes very pronounced.

"Well," he said, after a minute, "it's rather

complicated, getting there. I'd better take you. Come along."

He was right. It was rather complicated. They went up the big front staircase as far as the first landing. There Paul pushed back a heavy velvet curtain, hung on rings, disclosing a door. The door opened, and shut behind them, Jane found herself with Paul on a narrow, very dimly lighted, staircase leading away at right angles from the original stair. At the top of these narrow stairs there was another door. This led into a room which Jane instantly called to herself, the "Room of Doors." She counted them. There were eight. The room itself was treated like an entrance, or waiting room. There were stiff chairs, high backed and formal, set about the wall. Over in one corner of the room stood a white marble statue of a veiled woman a little larger than life size. The marvelously carved veil was bound on her head and fell all about her to the floor. Besides the chairs, the statue was the only thing in the room.

They passed within touching distance of this statue to get to the door through which Mr. Waul apparently meant to go. Jane stopped

an instant, looking at the uncanny thing; for it did seem uncanny, standing here alone in this Room of Doors, all by itself, so stark and white and lonely. So oddly veiled!

"We call her the Lady of Mystery," Paul said, conversationally. "My father bought her and liked her for some unknown reason. And it really isn't bad, just as a statue, if it only meant something. My sister Grace—Mrs. Merriman, you know—can't abide it. So the poor thing's stuck off here."

"The veil is quite wonderful, carved in marble like that, isn't it!" Jane exclaimed. And then she added, a little teasingly. "Surfgate's rather mysterious all around, anyway! Perhaps this Lady of Mystery in her veil is the presiding genie of the place. Is a genie feminine, ever? What do you bet *she* took the bracelet?"

But Mr. Waul would not play. Instead, he jerked open a door and said, "Are you coming?"

Another staircase! Jane gasped. Then she laughed. It was a funny house!

This staircase was spiral. And it went up and up and up, quite to the top of the house. And all the way there were windows, little diamond-shaped windows, curtained now by the gray rain.

As they neared the top of the spiral staircase, both Jane and her guide went softly. A very dreary sound was coming to them, muffled by a wall. It was the sound of bitter, wretched sobbing.

"That must be Nora," Jane whispered.

"I am afraid so," Mr. Waul whispered back. "For certainly it isn't Aunt Augusta. What is the matter with the poor girl?"

"That is what I want to find out," Jane replied. "If you'll go back now, I'm going to talk with her through the keyhole. Thanks very much for showing me the way."

The sound of Nora's weeping had made both young people forget themselves and the strained relations between them. They stood on the top stair looking at each other with troubled eyes.

"Why through the keyhole?" Mr. Waul asked.

"Because she's locked in."

"No, never!" He was truly shocked. They both turned to the door. "But you're right, for see, the key is on this side," he whispered.

"So it is. Then I'm going in. I'm not afraid of your Aunt Augusta Williams," Jane declared, glancing defiantly at the door beside the door through which the sobbing came.

"Can you find the way down again?" Paul Waul asked.

"Of course."

Jane paid no more attention to him, but softly turned the key in the lock of Nora's door, slipped through, and closed the door ever so softly at her back. Paul Waul might do as he liked; so far as Jane was concerned he was dismissed.

CHAPTER XI

THE STATUE TREMBLES

IN SPITE of her sobbing, Nora had heard the whispering out on the stairs. She was sitting up on the edge of her bed now, facing the door. Her face was streaked with the tears of a whole night's crying and her eyes, which yesterday had been so bright, were swollen almost shut. Jane ran to her and took both her hands.

"Why, Nora Brady, what have they done to you?" she cried. Then, remembering the other Turret Room, she added more softly, "What has *she* done to you?"

"You're a lovely thing to come. But I knew you would. I knew you was the salt of the earth the minute I set eyes on you yesterday afternoon."

This was nice for Jane; but it embarrassed her, too.

"Oh, no, Nora," she whispered modestly, sitting down beside the girl and still keeping her hands. "But tell me exactly what has happened."

Nora released her hands to dry her eyes. "Last night, after I left you, you know——" she began.

"Yes, yes, Miss Williams came for you."

"She thought I was a thief, that it was me who took that bracelet! Would you believe it? She'd been into everything here in my room. And, of course, she found the suitcase that I'd packed, and she'd unpacked it, and there was my best clothes and everything just dumped in a heap on the floor. She'd found the suitcase hidden behind my bed."

"But she hadn't found the bracelet in your suitcase?" Jane asked eagerly.

Nora buried her face in her hands and burst into tears again. When she could speak she moaned, without uncovering her face, "Now *you're* suspecting me. I never thought *you'd* think me a thief."

"And I don't. Truly I don't, Nora. Only, why had you packed your bag, and why were you running away? Couldn't you explain it to Miss Williams?"

"That's what she said. 'Why was you running away?' As if a blind man couldn't see! Who wouldn't be running away from the likes of her? And I was being honest, in spite of it

all. Instead of giving her her two weeks' notice, I was being off without my month's pay. It comes every month, and to-morrow is payday. I thought it all out careful-like yesterday. 'A month's wages equal two weeks' notice,' I figured. Do you see?"

"Yes. But it seems funny, leaving a position by running away. Why didn't you tell her you were going and that you would give up the month's wages to be fair with her?"

"I should have done that. You've the quick wits, miss. I was going to do that. But the way I behaved was on account of the gypsy. She put the fear into me."

"The gypsy!" Jane was thrilled; for yesterday that ragged regal gypsy woman had cast a spell of fascination over Jane that was still with her. "Do tell me quickly, Nora! At least, if you want to. You wouldn't before, you know."

But Nora was as eager now to tell as Jane was to hear. "It was like this," she explained. "The gypsy woman came to the back door yesterday afternoon and wanted to tell our fortunes, out of our hands. Everything is there written right in your palm, you know, if only you've the knowledge to see it. Well, this gypsy has the knowledge. She read our hands as though they

was open books. She told me everything about myself I myself ever knew. She said right off that my father and mother was born in Ireland, and that I'd lots of brothers and sisters, and that we'd all had measles together, except them that wasn't born yet, and that they had 'em later. She said that I had gone to school very little, but that when I was there I learned fast enough, and stood high in my classes. She said I loved dances and parties and good times. She read my hand like a book, I tell you."

Nora paused a minute, wide-eyed, remembering the wonder of it.

"Well, miss, if she could have knowledge of the past like that," she continued, "it stands to reason that she'd not go far wrong with her knowledge of the future, don't it? She looked me right in the eye—*and she's got eyes*—and she says, 'Nora, it's never happy you'll be in this position you've got. Ill luck will be about you and under you and over you, before you and behind you, just so long as you stay here. There is mystery in this great house, and danger. I wouldn't sleep under its dark roof one night. Come away with us gypsies and be freed forever from a fate I see darkening.' Her exact words."

Here Nora suddenly returned to her weeping,

her face down on Jane's slight but very erect shoulder. Jane patted the back of Nora's head.

"There, there, hush," she murmured soothingly, her ear listening toward the next room. But in spite of her worry that Miss Williams might come bursting in at any minute, and her genuine sympathy for Nora, she could not manage to keep a laugh out of her voice, and a ripple of amusement out of her hazel eyes. The gypsy woman had certainly talent in the arts of deduction. It was all very obvious, of course, and nothing at all remarkable that the gypsy had been able to tell so much to Nora that was true. Everything was easily explained—except the prophecy. The prophecy seemed genuine enough. And already it had fulfilled itself. Mystery did abound at Surfgate, and Nora herself had certainly come under a shadow.

"So you're going to turn gypsy," Jane whispered, finally. "I almost envy you."

"No, I can't go, not locked in like this, and Miss Williams saying she'll put me in prison if I try to get away. Anyway, I don't know that I could have managed. My sisters and brothers mightn't like it. In the night I saw how it was that I'd been sort of hypnotized. A spell cast! I'd not make a good gypsy, not really, I'm think-

ing. If I was free and could go, and not in danger of prison for just trying, I'd get out to Harmony Cove, though, where the gypsy promised to be waiting for me, and explain. She warned me that, if I changed my mind about being a gypsy, I'd got to go and tell her, for she'd be waiting. It's a terrible lot to ask, Miss Dyke, but I thought you might be after doing it for me. You said if I needed help——"

Jane thought quickly. "I'll tell you what I'll do," she said after a minute. "I'll go and explain to Miss Williams all that you've explained to me. I'll make her understand. She'll have to see that your being packed up to run away like that was simply a coincidence—that it has nothing to do with the bracelet mystery. That's what I'll do first. But if she is stupid about it and even then won't let you go to explain to the gypsy, I'll ask her to let *me* go. I'd like to do it for you, of course. But Miss Williams will have to say I may, for all of us at Surfgate are prisoners, almost as much as you are, Nora. We aren't allowed out at all."

Jane sounded efficient and strong. Nora's tears dried as she listened to her as though they had never been. Here was friendship and here was help.

"You'll do all that for me!" she exclaimed, ecstatically. "Heaven bless you!"

"The other room up here in the turret is hers, isn't it?" Jane asked bravely. "I'll go this minute, and I'll make her listen."

"That's her room. But she's not there. She's after taking her constitutional by now. That's what she calls it. I heard her going down, a little before you came up. She'll be walking down among the vegetables now, poking at 'em with her cane. You go down the spiral staircase. In the room with the doors and the statue there's one door you can't see. It's behind the violet curtain, in a sort of cubby-hole in the wall back of that queer lady. There's a little hall and then stairs. The stairs go right down to the garden. But you can't get out without a key. It's really the servants' entrance. Miss Williams is the only one at Surfgate except us servants who ever use it. Here is my key."

Nora had taken a key from her bureau drawer and pressed it into Jane's hand.

"All right," Jane said. "I'm off, then. If she'll let you free to go and explain to the gypsy, I'll come right back up here and tell you. But if she still doesn't trust you, Nora, then I'll go

myself, and I won't come back till I've done it. So now tell me where Harmony Cove is."

"That's easy enough." Nora was almost laughing now, in her relief. "It's best to go out the kitchen door, though, or you can go out the front, of course, though it's not so straight a way, then. The kitchen way gets you right out on to the cliffs. Turn to your left and walk along the ocean. It is about half a mile, or maybe not so far. You come to a little stream flowing into the ocean, and a big hollow. The gypsy said she'd be waiting there, and that she'd wait till ten o'clock. She said she'd begin her waiting at eight o'clock. If I hadn't come by ten, she said I'd be sorry, and she said, several times, 'the earlier the better'—looking at me with her eyes." Jane was at the door ready to be off. But Nora kept her.

"But I wouldn't like you going alone, miss," she said. "Get Mr. Waul to go with you. He knows the way and the dangers of walking too near the edges of the cliff in spots. And he's good-hearted like you are. He'll be glad to do it."

Jane stiffened. "No, thank you," she said. "I won't need Mr. Waul."

There was such a new edge in her voice that

Nora opened her eyes wide. Jane laughed. "Don't look so scared," she said quickly. "I'm not cross with you, Nora. It's just thinking of Mr. Waul. Now, I'm really off. I suppose I must lock you in as I go. It's a horrid shame."

Jane half expected Paul Waul to be waiting outside the door for her. When she saw that there was no one on the landing or on the circular staircase, she thought she was relieved. But there was another emotion mixed with that relief which, if Jane had been a little older or a little wiser, she would have realized was disappointment.

When she came down into the Room of the Doors she looked for the violet curtain. There it was, hung in a niche in the wall behind the white marble statue of the veiled lady, the Lady of Mystery. If Jane had noticed it when she came through with Mr. Waul, she would have thought it hung there merely as background for the statue. The Room of the Doors was well lighted by two windows let into the wall so high that one could not see out of them, even standing on tiptoe. There was really nothing so very mysterious about the room. How could there be?—it was all so commonplace and all in broad daylight.

Still, Jane was conscious of something strange here, something unexplained and weird. She would be glad to get out of it into the garden. Very quickly she went toward the curtain. But halfway across the floor she stopped short. The statue was trembling!

No, it wasn't either. Or if it had trembled, it had been Jane's step on the floor that caused it. She walked more softly. This time the lady did not tremble; but when Jane was very near her, at her elbow, in fact, she felt as though the statue had raised its opposite arm, shrugged its opposite shoulder, or moved in some definite way. How she knew this Jane couldn't have said. It was merely something she sensed. And it was very unpleasant. But the whole statue really shook this time. It was, it must be, alive.

Jane did not wait to make certain of this. She snatched back the violet curtain. And there, to her great relief, was the ninth door. It opened into a small hall, just as Nora had promised, and at the farther end of the hall a stair, six or seven shallow steps, going down to another door. This hall and its stair were very dim, lighted only by a small pane of sickly green glass. Jane jumped the little flight of shallow steps in her zeal to get out of reach of the veiled lady.

CHAPTER XII

HIDE AND SEEK

AND there she was, smack up against the door that opened into the garden, supposedly, and to what, she felt, was the safety of out of doors. But first she must fumble with the key. She was so overeager to escape from the proximity of the veiled lady that she took about three more minutes than she would have needed, had she been cool, to fit the key into the lock and turn it. Her inefficiency at the simple business reminded her of nightmares she had had, where she was being chased by wild animals and couldn't run.

But at last the key clicked into the lock, turned easily, and Jane was through into the garden. She took one deep breath of the damp, fresh air, and then she grinned. "What's the matter with me is imagination," she told herself. "I'm getting as flighty as Beryl and as jumpy as any old woman!"

The vegetable garden was truly a magnificent

specimen of a country-house garden. Jane looked down long rows of neatly hedged plots of rich garden soil, all bordered by grassy paths. Some of the farther garden beds were glowing with yellow pumpkins, always a heartening and a jolly sight. Beyond the pumpkins, away at the end of the big garden, ran a series of grape arbors, and in the exact center of the line of arbors a white gate stood open and was swinging a little in the wind. Jane surmised that the gate stood open because Aunt Augusta had lately passed that way on her constitutional. Well, she would go as far as that gate and wait for the lady's return.

But first she must lock the door at her back. Miss Williams had been careful to lock it, even if she had left the gate swinging. Jane turned around—right into the face of Paul Waul. He had been standing at her shoulder, almost on the door sill. Jane gasped.

"Great Scott! You again!" she exclaimed. "Where'd you come from, anyway?"

But he did not answer her pertinent question. For a face naturally so jolly and whimsical, his was peculiarly grim. "Well?" he said. "Well, Jane Dyke?"

"Well! How many wells make a river?"

Jane wasn't being particularly clever; but she felt that this young man had no right to speak to her or look at her in this accusing way. And besides that, it is extremely irritating to be startled, and Jane had been very much startled to find him there so near her so unexplainably.

"Of course, I am asking you to tell me why you are out of bounds like this. You were at breakfast this morning when my sister, Mrs. Merriman, asked her guests under no circumstances to leave the house to-day."

"Oh, no, not quite that. She didn't say that about 'under no circumstances.' And besides, is the vegetable garden out of bounds? I wouldn't have thought so. I haven't worked that out. Anyway, it doesn't really matter, just now. I've got something very important to attend to. I'm looking for Miss Williams."

Paul laughed. But Jane felt that it was not quite the nicest laugh of which he was capable. "It isn't funny," she snapped.

"Oh, yes, it is funny," he countered. "Did you expect to find my aunt out here having breakfast with the pumpkins and the squashes? Or do you think that she breakfasts *on* raw squashes?"

"Neither *on* nor *with*," Jane answered, keep-

ing herself from chuckling. "It's nothing to do with squashes. She's simply out here taking a morning constitutional, after having breakfasted in bed. If you want to know how I know, ask the veiled lady."

Mr. Waul whistled. "On my word, you're right!" he exclaimed, "for here she comes!"

Miss Williams had appeared in the gateway; and now she was closing the gate behind her.

"If I were wearing a hat, I'd doff it to you, Miss Dyke," Paul said, but his face had grown grimmer, if anything. Miss Williams came walking importantly down a grassy path toward them, looking scarcely human in her crackling waterproof and slouching dark felt hat.

Jane, without paying further attention to Paul, started to meet her. But Paul went too —close at Jane's shoulder. He spoke in a low voice and earnestly: "I'm here to stick by in case you need me. Count on me, no matter what happens now. I'm for you, *in spite of everything.*"

But Jane hardly heard, and she did not try to fathom his meaning. She was nerving herself for the interview with the trying, unfriendly old lady.

Miss Williams's eyes popped at the sight of

Jane walking toward her in the garden. And then they flashed. But Jane was the first to speak. In face, in her overanxiety she began talking almost before she was within talking distance.

"Oh, Miss Williams," she blurted, "I've just come from Nora, in the turret. I want to tell you all about her. She never took your bracelet, never, never. It all happened because she is dreadfully superstitious, and the gypsy sort of hypnotized her and she was sort of unhappy to begin with, anyway. It was this way——"

"Save yourself the bother, Miss Dyke. I have already heard all that I need to know from my maid's own lips, garrulous creature that she is. I haven't locked her up because I am convinced that she is a thief. Not a bit of it. Just to teach the silly young thing a lesson. In spite of her trying to run away as she did try, I see no reason for suspecting her any more than suspecting any one else—if as much. I suppose your being out here is permissible, Miss Dyke, since my nephew is escorting you. But you do understand, I trust, that all of our guests to-day are pledged to stay indoors?"

"Oh, yes," Jane assured her. "I understand." But she did not look at Paul. Now was his time,

if he cared to, to say that she hadn't really understood, and that he had not been escorting her at all. But he kept silent.

Miss Williams gave Jane a cold nod, a nod of dismissal, and moved along cracklingly toward the little private door. If she was surprised to find it unlocked and standing wide open, she made no sign. But after she had closed it behind her, Paul and Jane, who were now standing watching each other, heard the key turn in the lock.

After a minute or so of this watchful silence, Jane said, a little ashamedly, "Well, I've got to thank you, Mr. Waul. You didn't give me away. I guess I'll be going in."

Jane had meant to be a little propitiatory, but Paul spoiled that desire of hers by his tone as much as by his words when he replied, "I guess you'd better be going in. And if you are at all the sort of girl you seem, you'll be a sport and keep the promise you made along with the others to *stay* in. I thought, a minute ago, you really meant to make it up with Aunt Augusta. It was your opportunity."

Jane was furious. "I never promised to stay in. Mrs. Merriman just asked us to stay in, that was all. She didn't ask us to promise. And I

only came out just now because I had to. I owed it to Nora. I had promised to help her. Your aunt might have listened to me. She didn't understand about the gypsy. Nora said she didn't even try to tell her about the gypsy. And it is the influence the gypsy had on her that made her try to run away."

Paul shrugged. "If it amuses you to be irrelevant——" he murmured. Then he asked, "Do you mind letting me in with your key?"

"Certainly not." An imp of mischief suddenly darted into Jane's brain. *"Certainly not."* Carefully she unlocked the door. Miss Williams was not on the stair. But coming in from the out of doors they could hardly have seen her if she were there, for the place seemed almost dark.

"Let me lock the door," Paul offered. But Jane held on to her key. "No. I like playing with keys," she said, and there was the hint of a chuckle in her voice. So Paul moved up to the top of the shallow little staircase to leave Jane room for her fumbling in the dim light.

Only, she did not fumble. Quick as a wink she flung open the door and was out. And still quicker than a wink, it seemed, she locked the door on the outside. Paul called to her, but she

did not listen. She took several skips, plain little-girl skips, away into the garden.

Whether it was mist or rain that was blowing into her face Jane could hardly tell. Anyway, it was delicious out here, in the blowing wet, free and alone. Free of that insufferable Mr. Paul Waul, who didn't play football—oh, no—because the world was too full of really interesting intellectual pursuits to give much time to athletics. He was a goody-goody, he was, and a prig! "I guess you'd *better* be going in!" He had said that to her, to Jane, as though she were some silly little girl—or perhaps more as though she were a sister. Jim did speak to her roughly like that sometimes. But then Paul Waul wasn't Jim. He wasn't her brother. What right had he to bully her?

At the same time, it was only this Paul Waul person she wanted to tease. She had no intention of staying on out of doors when the others couldn't. Really she was under a very serious obligation to get back into the house at once. She'd find some other door besides that private door, though. And truly she was in a very great hurry, on her own account, to get back. For there was Beryl whom she must see, to find out whether she had really overslept, or whether

she was in some way involved in the bracelet mystery. And then she had better find Mrs. Merriman and get her permission to go to Harmony Cove with Nora's message for the gypsy. No use to ask Miss Williams's permission; she realized that now.

She stopped skipping and turned back toward the house, and wandered along its oddly shaped wall, looking for a door. But before she came to a door it became necessary to climb the garden wall, a high affair built of huge blocks of stone. She used the woodbine growing strongly upon it for her toe-rests. But even then she mastered the wall only at the price of a rather badly scraped knee and elbow. And, just as she dropped down at the other side and saw the long French windows of the drawing room not far away from where she had landed, one of the panes was pushed violently open and Paul Waul burst out, bare-headed and apparently in great haste. Instantly Jane crouched, hiding herself behind a convenient bush. She felt that that young man was looking for Jane Dyke! Fortunately, he did not spy her, in spite of the vivid henna color of the wool frock she was wearing. He darted past, within touching distance, very nearly, and himself climbed the difficult wall,

using the woodbine as Jane had used it. But Jane had to admit to herself that he was much cleverer at climbing than she had been. Indeed, in spite of his famous scorn for athletic distinctions, he went over that rather difficult wall with extraordinary ease. Jane heard him drop to the ground on the other side, and then his feet running. She grinned to herself.

"Did he expect I'd stay there in the vegetable garden and wait for him!" she jeered, mentally.

Then, hurrying for fear he might come plunging back over the wall and really find her, Jane came out of hiding and sprinted toward the window through which Paul had come out. She pushed it open, and stepped in.

Huh! A funny house party truly! Here they all were. Sylvia was lying curled up on a divan in front of a fire, her golden head most picturesquely laid on a black velvet cushion, fast asleep. Max Colt, at a little table near one corner of the hearth, played solitaire morosely. Donald King sat on the floor, his back braced against a chair, reading a novel. And Cecil, his hands behind him, his head bowed, in what he apparently considered a good imitation of a criminal walking in a prison yard, was pacing back and forth the length of the long room.

And, finally, poor Grace, whose house party was certainly a wretched failure, sat pale and worried, knitting on a sweater destined for her wonderful uncle, Paul Waul.

And now it was only Grace who paid any particular attention to Jane, standing there just inside the French window, her dark curls sparkling with raindrops, her cheeks ruddy with exercise and fresh air. If the others realized that Jane had broken parole and cared, they appeared too listless to show interest in the fact.

"Where's Beryl?" Jane asked, looking around for her.

"We don't know," Grace answered. "I went right up to her room after breakfast to see if she was really all right, and she *wasn't there.* I've been all over the house hunting for her, and she simply isn't to be found."

Jane was aghast. "Are her clothes gone too?" she asked quickly.

"Why, of course not." Grace looked at Jane wide-eyed. "Why should her clothes be gone?"

"Did you look in her closet? Are you sure they aren't gone?"

"Why, of course I didn't look in her closet! Why should I?"

Jane felt her heart set out on an elevator ride

right down into her suède pumps. At that instant Sylvia yawned, stretched, and sat up. "I was really asleep," she murmured. "Dreaming. Oh, dear. Let's play cards or something. Won't somebody help me stay awake?"

"If you're bored, Sylvia, come take a walk with me," Cecil invited, offering his arm.

"Where to?"

"Back and forth, of course. It's really quite a big cell they've put us in."

Jane straightened her spine. How stuffy they all were! "I'm going to look for Beryl," she said. "I'll bring her down here, and then we can start a game of something, play charades."

She hurried out into the hall and up the stairs to the room from which Beryl had looked with such a frightened start into her eyes last night. She wished now, with all her heart, that she had been more persistent in her attempt to get Beryl to let her in. But her pride had been hurt by Beryl's behavior, and, in any case, she had had no reason to force herself on her chum when that chum had shown quite plainly that Jane was the last person in the world she had expected or wanted to see.

Now, again, no answer came to her knock. She tried the door and it opened. But the room

was empty. A maid had already been here, done her work, and gone. The square little guest room was as tidy as a ship's cabin.

Jane, hating this part of her detective work, but still under a necessity to do it, went to the closet and looked in. To her very great relief there hung Beryl's dresses, her coat, her hat, and down on the floor the brown oxfords, which she had worn yesterday on the journey, stood beside her silver evening pumps. So, apparently, Beryl, whatever the trouble she was in, had not run away.

Jane went down the hall to her own room. The instant she entered she was struck by its contrast to Beryl's. Beryl's room had been shipshape, ordered. But there was an air of disturbance over the Blue Room. Jane, just at first, hardly knew what gave her the impression of disorder, but gradually she saw. A drawer in her dressing table was half open, the scarf under her beside lamp was pulled awry, and one of the long, heavy window curtains was twisted and caught a little out of place on its rod. Even the big silver-colored rug was out of position, more to one side of the floor than the other, and not quite smooth. It was very odd, and it gave Jane an unpleasant feeling of irritation. Truly,

she detested this Blue Room, and she did wish that Grace had had the sense and the good taste to put her into one of the regular, comfortable little guest rooms, into a room like Beryl's.

She stayed in this uncongenial, rather bewildering environment only long enough to change into some wool stockings and a stout pair of sport ties. Quickly she slipped a white woolly sweater over her head, jammed a little white felt hat down on to her still damp curls, and escaped from the Blue Room.

A maid she happened to meet just outside directed her to Mrs. Merriman's boudoir. She knocked, and a light, preoccupied voice said, "Come in."

Mrs. Merriman was lying comfortably on a day-bed, propped up on a variety of gay-colored cushions, writing a letter. Jane took the place on the foot of the bed which her hostess indicated and plunged into Nora's story. "So, do you mind, Mrs. Merriman," she ended, "do you mind if I go to Harmony Cove and tell the gypsy woman that Nora's not coming? I won't be gone long, and it will be such a comfort to Nora!"

Mrs. Merriman looked at Jane silently for a few minutes, her expression speculative. Fin-

ally she smiled. "No, my dear, I don't mind," she said. "If any one questions your going, I'll take the responsibility. But you'd better get my brother to go with you. It will give him something to do, poor boy! He must be frightfully bored. And do ring that bell over there for my maid, will you, Jane? Of course, Aunt Augusta has gone a little too far. Nora must be unlocked at once."

Jane was on her feet, beaming. "Oh, thank you, thank you," she cried. "I knew everything would be all right if I could see you. I was silly to go to Miss Williams with it."

In Jane's pleasure at her sudden freedom and the idea of Nora's securing a champion in Mrs. Merriman, she utterly forgot that Mrs. Merriman certainly expected her to take Paul with her on the expedition. If she had remembered, it certainly would have spoiled everything!

"Don't walk too near the cliff," Mrs. Merriman called after her as she was hurrying away. "It has a way of crumbling in, and is really quite dangerous."

"I'll be careful," Jane called back, and her glad response drowned Mrs. Merriman's added remark: "Paul knows about that, anyway. He'll take care of you."

After Jane had run away, Mrs. Merriman returned to her letter-writing with a whimsical smile. "Delicious young thing!" she was thinking. "She was so sure of getting her way with me that she got into her outdoor things before ever she came to ask!"

CHAPTER XIII

BEWARE A DARK WOMAN

IT HAPPENED that no one, not even the cook, saw Jane when she left Surfgate by way of the kitchen door. She did not have to hesitate an instant as to her direction. Nora had said, "Turn to the left, and follow the cliff." She realized at once that her only difficulty was to be her footwear. For this sort of walking one needed sneakers. It was up and down, over bare, slippery rock most of the way. And it was obvious that one slip, if it occurred near the edge, would be fatal; below her, the ocean was churning itself against the rocks until it had the look of nothing in the world so much as soapsuds, tons and tons of soapsuds. And the noise it made! "Why, a walk down Broadway at theatre-time would be quieter," Jane thought.

But she loved it. Salt spray in her curls, salt mist on her face, and her heart beating with excitement in her adventure—she asked for nothing jollier.

She enjoyed the walk, toilsome as some of it was, so much that she was actually sorry when she came suddenly to a break in the line of the cliff and saw beneath her a hollowed gully, which held a stony field and a rushing, boiling little stream, emptying itself into the ocean. It was Harmony Cove. For there, near a smoldering fire, sat the gypsy, like a statue personifying "Waiting." And near her a young gypsy girl stood, waiting too. But both of them were gazing oceanward, as though absorbed by the stormy sea. Jane stood on the rocks above their heads, looking down at them, quite unnoticed.

She watched them for several seconds, fascinated by the patience expressed in their postures; and by their fluttering, bright garments. Then she went climbing down. But before the descent was completed the statues came alive. The girl, at some word from the older woman, suddenly knelt, and using two flat pieces of driftwood, began shoveling sand on to the fire. Jane stood still, her arms spread at her back against a boulder, holding herself steady on very unsteady footing. Had they sensed her without turning around to see her? No, she was sure they hadn't. And they hadn't heard her. To hear her would have been impossible, in any

case, against the roar of the sea. And their actions were so free, so unconscious, they were aware of nothing new and human having entered their surroundings, surely.

So Jane completed her scramble down and started across the stubbly field toward the gypsies. They were standing now, their profiles against the opposite rise of cliff, looking seaward again. Suddenly the taller gypsy—yesterday's gypsy—bent her head sidewise, as though listening to some sound, some note. "Now they have seen me, out of the corner of their eyes," Jane believed. But no. They had neither seen nor heard the approach of a human being. But they had heard *something.* It was as though they were listening to a voice, or a strain of music from the earth. For the queenly woman began dancing. And, after an instant, the young girl began dancing, too. It was a slow dance, arms high above their heads, faces bent, listening. They were swaying, gliding, then stepping with feet like waves of water, their autumn-leaf-colored rags fluttering about them. They were dancing on the sand-smothered fire. Jane stood, delighted.

And then they did catch sight of her. Presto. Everything was changed. Their bodies which

had been expressing joy in some unheard earth rhythm expressed joy no longer but grew rigid. The faces which they turned square upon Jane's advance, were suddenly amazingly greedy. And almost before Jane had time to realize that they had turned at all and were looking at her, their hands were thrust toward her in a very repulsive gesture of greed.

The older gypsy spoke sharply to her young companion. Jane could not understand the language, but the sense of the words came to her. She felt that the words had expressed disappointment that she was not Nora, and surprise that any one at all was here in this wild place in this bad weather.

And their greedy hands were beckoning. The older woman called to Jane in English: "Fortune? Fortune? We will tell you a fortune!"

Jane shuddered. The transformation from poetry and wild beauty was rather appalling. But she was attracted, as well as repelled. It would be fun to have a real gypsy tell her fortune in this lonely place.

She came up to them, nodding. Yes, she would have her fortune told. But first she gave Nora's message.

The gypsy's eyes flashed. "It's too bad she's

such a fool," was her reply to the message. "She throws away luck and happiness. You can come in her place!"

Jane was startled, for she felt the power behind the flashing, angry dark eyes. "Oh, no," she replied quickly. And then, feeling the woman's anger turned from the absent Nora to herself, she added mollifyingly, "I've got to finish school, you see. But I would like my fortune told." She held her hands toward the woman, palms upward.

"All right. But pay first. Silver opens my seeing eyes."

Jane gasped. Of course she had been stupid. She knew all that about crossing the fortune-teller's palm with silver. Who didn't? But she hadn't a penny with her. "I forgot," she said, much embarrassed. "I haven't any money with me at all."

But the gypsy's eyes, no longer angry, only greedy, were fastened on a rather large silver pin, made into the form of a bow and arrow which pinned the white collar of Jane's dress at her throat. The pin was jeweled with tiny emeralds. The gypsy pointed. "That will do just as well as money," she wheedled. "I will accept the pin."

The trinket was a present from Jane's brother Jim. Jane thought about it quickly. She decided that Jim would understand her giving it in return for her fortune. It wasn't as though Jim wasn't always giving her presents. This was only one of many such offerings from her brother and chum. But whether she had really decided for herself or the woman had decided for her, she scarcely could tell as she unclasped the safety catch and gave up the pin.

But in the end Jane realized that the fortune was not worth the pin. For it was rather meager.

"Beware! That is what I say to you, Beware! Danger lies in your path, under your feet. I cannot see exactly what the danger is. But I see that it is near and great. Watch out. . . That is all that I can see. It is so near, this peril, that it blots out all the rest that I might see. It blots out even your past. It is very bad."

Jane laughed. She was not frightened. But she was disappointed. This was no fortune, and she had paid for a fortune with Jim's pin. "Oh, do try to see something," she begged. "I don't care so much about the past. But the future——"

"Wait. Be quiet. It is coming. I see . . .

I see a silver spoon, and you born, choking on it. Fairly choking."

Jane was shocked by the sudden snarl in the gypsy's voice. She tried to pull her hands away. But the woman held on firmly. "Be still. I see. . . . The silver spoon did not quite choke you. You survived and throve. You have never been sick. Pain, suffering are strangers to you. Heaven smiles. Love everywhere. At home, at school, love everywhere. There is a brother. More love. You are popular. Even with your teachers you are popular. If you should come with us gypsies you would be popular with us. It is your fate. You are good, too, but without learning how to be, without having to try. What credit is that! You have a kind heart, but it is a careless heart. You do not think about the sorrows and troubles of others. You think only that it is dull and stupid not to be quite happy. It is you who are stupid. It is stupid to be forever light-hearted.

"Your friends are real friends. You have one, two, three. That is rare. Most people have one or two at most. But beware of a dark woman. She is very clever. She is too clever for you, who are not a bit clever. She will do you no good. There is a young man who is in

love with you. Do not laugh. Yes, I know, there are several of them. But this young man is different. He wishes to be betrothed. He has more sense than you have. He has more sense than most people. He will make you a better husband than you deserve. That is, if you live. If you survive the danger that lurks. Keep away from water. It is water that threatens. I see it now. And there is mystery. There is a mystery enveloping you at this instant, enveloping more than you. I see——"

But Jane, forgetting her surprise at the unfriendliness displayed in the reading of her palm up to this point burst out, "Yes! Mystery! Oh, see that. Try to see that. It is the bracelet. Who stole the bracelet? Tell me that."

The woman frowned. "You have spoiled all," she scolded. "I have stopped seeing. You broke the thread. It is gone. It was your future I had turned to. But now this only I can tell you of it. It is bright if you escape the peril which is near, and if you do not finally, in spite of yourself, strangle on that silver spoon."

Jane did not have to snatch her hands away at this final malice. The gypsy had dropped them, as though they burned her. And now she was looking at Jane with a strange expression on

her hawklike, greedy face. From Jane's white felt hat jammed down on her sparkling, mist-drenched curls, to the soles of her strong tanned sport ties, the gypsy surveyed her with greedy attention.

She said, "Those are very valuable warnings I have given you, lady—that about the spoon and that about water. This little pin does not half pay for it. But I will be content and say nothing about that, if you will now give me your hat, your sweater, your stockings and your shoes. My daughter is chilly. Winter comes soon. She is cold at this instant. Hurry."

Jane was, in her own diction, flabbergasted. "Indeed I won't," she cried, and shook her head, backing away.

But the woman advanced and laid hands upon her. She snatched off the little white hat and tossed it to her daughter. "Now the sweater," she commanded. "Raise your arms."

Jane began to struggle. She knew there was no use to scream for help down here in Harmony Cove, with only the loud waves and the sea gulls to hear. But she could fight. And she did. It was useless, however. The gypsies were stronger than she was. The mother held her firmly while the daughter took what she wanted.

Jane stood bare-legged and bare-footed, sweaterless, hatless—and furious.

And now the young gypsy girl was getting into her things. When she stood, decked in the jaunty hat, the sweater, the wool stockings and the stout ties, she looked, except for her ragged skirt, not unlike any boarding-school girl.

"Here," she said to Jane, holding out a ragged, many-colored shawl to her—a shawl in which she had been wrapped when Jane first spied her from the cliff, and before she began to dance—"a present."

There was nothing sarcastic in the girl's tone. It was friendly. She liked Jane; as the gypsy mother had truly said, people were bound to like her. "And wear my sneakers. They will get you home without cuts."

"We go now," the mother said, when Jane stood, the shawl blowing about her form, her bare feet encased in a pair of very old black sneakers, laced with strands of seaweed in place of strings. "And we do not steal. Your fortune was worth it. Tell Nora she will be sorry she came not. Let us hurry, Loretta. They blow for us."

Sounds of several automobile horns were sounding faintly above the ocean's racket. Jane

turned and saw a road, where she had not realized there was one, partly concealed by scrub pines and firs. There were three automobiles full of gypsies, and a truck heaped high with their belongings. A man was standing up in the foremost car, beckoning peremptorily to Jane's companions.

And then a strange thing happened. As the girl called Loretta stepped away from Jane, following her mother toward the waiting caravan, she looked at Jane with friendly eyes and smiled. Jane returned the smile. It was a little miracle, a miracle Jane did not try to explain to herself. The untrained, the wild gypsy girl and the civilized, carefully brought up boarding-school girl saw each other as friends. Yes, in spite of the fact that the gypsy was walking away in clothes which she had taken by force from Jane!

Jane, however, did not wait to watch the daughter and mother board the gypsy caravan. She felt that the sooner she escaped from Harmony Cove and got back to Surfgate the better. With all possible speed she made her way across the field, and up the side of the cliff to the cliff path. Loretta's sneakers, disreputable as they were, served her well. In fact, she found her-

self more at ease on the slippery path and more at home on the rocks than she had been, coming.

When she was safely out of sight of the caravan and knew that even if they should suddenly decide—those gypsy men and women—to come after her, they could not catch her now, she began to enjoy herself.

Talk about adventure! Loretta's smile! And they had actually asked her to go away in their caravan and be a gypsy! She remembered the way the two gypsies had danced before they knew she was there, watching. There was magic in that. Strange, lovely magic. It was true it had been, all in an instant, transformed into unlovely greed and straight dishonesty. But through the dark memory of the greed and the dishonesty there shone a bright memory—that free moment of dancing when the gypsies were in harmony with some magic which she could not discern.

Jane stepped lightly along her slippery path, the gaudy, autumn-colored shawl wrapped about her against the rain and driving mists. She knew that she must look startlingly like a gypsy herself, up here against the sky, walking in the rain. She was so exhilarated and happy that she had to do something about it.

CHAPTER XIV

DANGER, IN EARNEST

AND so she sang. Jane was not in training for a concert singer, but she had a good voice, and when she let it out to its full capacity —which she only did when no one was about— she enjoyed herself immensely.

"There were three gypsies a-come to my door,
And downstairs ran this a-lady, O!
And one sang high, and another sang low,
And the other sang, Bonny, bonny Biscay, O!

"Then she pulled off her silk-finished gown
And put on hose of leather, O!
The ragged, ragged, rags about our door—
She's gone with the wraggle-taggle gypsies, O!

"It was late last night, when my lord came home,
Enquiring for his a-lady, O!
The servants said, on every hand:
'She's gone with the wraggle-taggle gypsies, O!'

" 'O, saddle to me my milk-white steed,
Go fetch me my pony, O!
That I may ride and seek my bride,
Who is gone with the wraggle-taggle gypsies,
O!'

"O, he rode high and he rode low,
He rode through wood and copses too,
Until he came to an open field,
And there he espied his a-lady, O!

" 'What makes you leave your house and land?
What makes you leave your money, O?
What makes you leave your new-wedded lord,
To go with the wraggle-taggle gypsies, O?'

" 'What care I for my house and my land?
What care I for my money, O?
What care I for my new-wedded lord?
I'm off with the wraggle-taggle gypsies, O!'

" 'Last night you slept on a goose-feather bed,
With the sheets turned down so bravely, O!
And to-night you'll sleep in a cold open field,
Along with the wraggle-taggle gypsies O!'

" 'What care I for a goose-feather bed,
With the sheet turned down so bravely, O?
For to-night I shall sleep in a cold open field,
Along with the wraggle-taggle gypsies, O!' "

But the final "O," though it belonged in the song, was quite outside of it. It was a cry of dismay. For the ground had suddenly given way under Jane's gay steps, and the next instant she went plunging down toward the ocean—feet first, fortunately. It felt as though she had been caught in an earthquake or something as cataclysmal. But it was only a foot or two of earth, really, that had been disturbed. She had forgotten Mrs. Merriman's warning about the dangers of walking too near the edge of the cliff, and this was the result.

The way she escaped broken bones, or even worse, sudden death, was difficult to see. For she had been pitched down almost the height of an ordinary house into a rocky grotto under the cliff's edge. She landed, crumpled to her knees, on a thick, deep mound of slimy seaweed.

But if she had been saved by a miracle from the reasonably-to-be-expected results of such a fall, she saw at once that it might need a greater miracle to save her from the thing that threat-

ened now—death by drowning. Here she was at the foot of a perpendicular rise of rock, in a grotto in which the water was rising, for the tide was coming in. The comparative quietness of the water here did not deceive her into imagining it friendly. Beyond the high, narrow sea doorway of the grotto the ocean lashed and raged; only a mild wash of foam appeared to be bubbling up over the sea door sill. But Jane's first canny glance at that light foam told her plainly enough that perhaps only minutes were necessary to fill the seemingly protected tranquillity of the place with thunder and destruction. As she had walked along singing, she had noticed with surprise the rapidity with which the water had risen in these rocky grottos since the start of her return to Surfgate. Even as she knelt now on her mound of seaweed, taking in her situation, she felt, or imagined she felt, that the icy water had already risen several inches. Her only chance, she thought, would be to swim. But how absurd to call it a chance. Competent swimmer that she was, she was not so competent as all that. For who could swim in that ocean boiling and seething over and among rocks out there beyond her grotto? And where should she swim to, supposing she was a giantess for

strength and a champion for skill? For a mile, at any rate, perhaps more, there was nothing but cliff either way. There was no chance of finding a landing on that gray wall.

She got to her feet painfully, for she had wrenched a knee, and stretched her arms up the cliff above her head. Her finger tips reached a spot not one fifth of the way to the top. The only way of escape in that direction was wings. It was too bad, it was a shame that people didn't have wings. If she were a sea gull, now, she could escape. But she was only a girl. And the water *was* rising. She felt it creeping toward her waist.

She wouldn't stand here and wait for it. She couldn't stand and wait. "They also drown who only stand and wait." She remembered that her sneakers would be a handicap in the approaching battle with Old Ocean. She must get them off, and the shawl too.

Balancing herself with one hand against the cliff's side, she lifted one foot and struggled at the seaweed lace. But it was all slimy, and one hand would never do the trick. She tried using two hands, but without her steadying touch on the cliff she swayed and tumbled to her knees again. This time the water, kneeling as she

was, had risen halfway to her armpits. Horrified, she regained her feet, and leaning her back against the cliff, tugged again at the seaweed laces of one of the gypsy's sneakers.

Then it was that she heard a voice shrieking. It wasn't the swirling sea gulls' cries. It was a human voice and it cried, "Help, help, help, help, help!" On and on.

It was quite a minute before she realized that it was her own voice, Jane Dyke's voice, making the crazy racket. She made the discovery only because the voice was tearing her throat, splitting it. But she couldn't see why the voice didn't stop, now that she had found it to be her own voice, and wanted it to stop. It could do no possible good, only harm. There was no one to hear in this wild place, even if the call could carry above the surf's roar and the sea gulls' cries. And it was wasting the strength she needed so much to get her sneakers off, and to swim. "Help, help, help, help, help!"

But there were more voices than Jane's voice. At least, there was one other voice. She did not stop her own screams, because she couldn't, but she listened, attentive to that other voice. It rose above the surf's roar, above the sea gulls' cries, above her own voice. She wanted to hear

what the voice was saying. Out of mere curiosity she wanted to know. But she couldn't distinguish the words. Not at first. But now she did. And what familiar, homely words they were! Just two of them, but *so sweet.*

The two words were being bawled over and over above her "help-helps." And they were these: *"Shut up!"*

She knew that the words were familiar, and for some reason sweet, but their actual meaning was some appreciable instants in penetrating her brain. But when she finally arrived at their message, she did shut up, and she looked up. Surely, surely brother Jim had come to the rescue.

She thought the face bent there over the cliff's edge was a sea gull's wing. But when she looked harder, it stopped being a wing and was Mr. Paul Waul! But the color of the wing stayed. Mr. Waul's face was extraordinarly white.

When he saw Jane's wild stare clear to intelligence he shouted: "Stand and wait right where you are. I'll be back. Promise?"

Jane shouted back: "They also drown who only stand and wait." Yes, she did. Here was somebody with whom to share a joke which a

minute ago had stood in peril of being lost forever.

Suddenly his face didn't seem so white. "You'll do," he bawled, and vanished.

Jane spent the time he was gone in knotting the gypsy's shawl tightly about her shoulders in such a way that it fell only on her back. For she surmised that Paul would return with a rope or a ladder or something else for her to climb, and she did not want to lose that shawl in the scrabble. It was rather odd the way she trusted him to return in time, before the tide had taken her; for Surfgate was quite a walk away, she knew very well, and he would never have time to go and come. Even so, she was confident now. He wouldn't let her drown.

"Look out down there! Hi!"

She backed toward the ocean, into the ocean, as far as she dared, "looking out." And down it came. A tree, of all things!

It was a young spruce. And Mr. Waul had dropped it over the edge with such dexterity that it stood leaning now against the side of the cliff, held solid by its clump of heavy roots, in spite of the rising water, which was now almost to Jane's waist.

"Brace it a little better," Paul called down.

"And come up like a cat. Don't knock it down and lose it, 'cause there aren't any more like it to be had just now!"

Jane surveyed this surprising ladder skeptically. "What's the use?" she called back. "It only reaches halfway up—the strong part. I can't walk on twigs."

But Paul didn't bother to answer. Or, rather, his next action was his adequate answer. He threw himself down on the ground, and dangled the old black slicker he had been wearing over the edge of the cliff till it touched the top of the tree. Ah! Jane saw light.

All during that delicate, careful bit of climbing Jane was aware—she hardly knew how, for certainly her attention was of necessity on her feet too—of Paul Waul's intent, encouraging eyes. It was as though it were through some power in them, in those eyes, that she was made steady, not to say clever, in her climbing. But even so, before she was quite within reach of the slicker, her tree was rocking perilously. And then, the thing toppled over—splash—into the watery grotto. But Jane, praise be, was swinging high, clutched on to the slicker. Up here there were little crevices in the rock, and Jane's toes found them. With the help of those crev-

ices, and the persistent tugging on Paul Waul's part, and also with the aid of a band of angels that must have flown to her aid, at last one of Jane's hands was over the edge.

Yet this moment was the most critical of all, perhaps. Mr. Waul was lying flat, his legs twined about a convenient rock, and his hold on the coat, in spite of Jane's weight, was certain. But because Jane was so close to him now, and because neither of them quite dared let the coat go, he could not pull her any farther.

"Keep hold of the coat and fling yourself," he panted. "My shoulder." And she thought he added to that, "You lamb!"

It was those two last words, the words she *thought* she had heard, that keyed Jane up to her final effort. She reached his shoulder somehow, and hauled. The next she knew she was lying on the rocks, breathing so hard she thought her chest would burst, and Mr. Waul was kneeling at her side.

"You lamb!" She was sure of the words this time. "Now don't faint and be a goat."

She sat up. She had to, to chuckle properly. "I won't faint," she assured him, "because nobody ever taught me how."

But Jane's chuckle was the thing that un-

nerved the rescuer. He suddenly buried his face in his arms and groaned.

"Don't! Don't!" Jane begged, for she had never seen a man break down, and it frightened her unspeakably. Then she saw his bloody hands. "Oh, your hands! Is it your hands?" she cried. "How did you ever hurt them like that?"

He looked up. "No, it's not my hands," he said. "It's you. You are the limit. And look at your own hands and your arms too. And great Halifax! Where are your stockings?"

Jane's hands and arms and legs were certainly a sight, but some of it was merely dirt, in spite of her sea bath. Ugh! But the knee that she had thought badly wrenched after her fall, what of that? She felt of it with surprise, for there was no pain. Well, it must have come unwrenched in her later efforts. That was it.

"But how did you get so wounded?" she begged. "You didn't go tumbling and cliff climbing and things like that."

He looked at his hands with surprise, seeing the blood for the first time. " 'Twas the tree, I guess," he said. "Last night's storm had done most of the work, but some of the roots were still earthbound. I hadn't a spade!"

"And you dug it up with your hands! Bravo! But if they don't hurt dreadfully—only I am afraid they do!—why did you groan just now? You frightened me."

"I groaned at your joking, Jane. You joked when you were looking up from that awful place down there, even before I was at all sure I could save you. And just now you joked again. Who wouldn't groan?"

"Are they so bad as that, my jokes?" she asked, as though he had hurt her feelings. They looked at each other steadily then, until a ripple of laughter could not be kept longer from her hazel eyes. After that ripple had broken the spell, they both threw back their heads and shouted with laughter.

When they were sensible again, Paul answered, and not till then: "Your jokes are pretty terrible, Jane, you must admit." He was suddenly quite serious. "Personally, I think your bracelet joke is quite the worst of the lot, though!"

"My bracelet joke!" Jane was wide eyed now, truly wide eyed, no pretending about it.

CHAPTER XV

BACK TO THE HAUNTED CHAMBER

PAUL nodded emphatically. "Yes, your bracelet joke. And all this running-away business, too. Running away, getting out of the game as you tried to do by running away—that doesn't fit in with the rest of you, Jane. That isn't like you."

"You think I stole the bracelet?"

"I'm jolly well certain you did."

"Well, Mr. Detective, you are absolutely on the wrong track, and you've been wasting time frightfully, shadowing me. It's funny, but, do you know, I never dreamed any one could suspect me—though, Heaven knows, I was suspecting everybody. That was pretty stupid, wasn't it?"

Jane was standing a little way back from the cliff's edge, facing Mr. Waul. She was not surprised that he took her word for her innocence instantly. But the dismay in his face was com-

ical. She asked, "But whatever made you think I could do such a thing as steal?" She wasn't angry; one can't be angry with a person who has just saved one's life—not gracefully, anyway.

Paul's reason for having been so certain that Jane was the person he must follow and watch and prove guilty was not, after all, too uncomplimentary. He had looked all the guests over pretty carefully, on arriving last night, and he had decided that Jane was the only one there with the spunk and the hardihood for the deed. He knew that Miss Williams had taken a particular dislike to Jane, and he realized all too well that when his aunt had a prejudice she could make herself unspeakably unpleasant over it. Well, he imagined at once that Jane had simply retaliated. She had taken the bracelet to tease and "get back at" Miss Williams. What he hadn't been able to explain to himself was why Jane held out so long, why she didn't own up when she saw how seriously the affair was being taken, and how it was ruining Grace's party. He got the idea that she might have lost the bracelet and was really in trouble about it. But that theory had rather fallen down when, last night—or rather, early this morning—he

had surprised her *trying to put it back.* Why, of course, what other reason could he make out for her having stolen down to the drawing room in the small hours! If he hadn't made a noise and startled her—he had blamed himself for that ever since—he was certain she would have put the bracelet back on the piano, as she seemed to be reaching to do, though he hadn't actually seen it in her hand, of course. Then she would have crept back to bed and all would have been well.

But that had failed. So he had followed her about—she knew all about that. He had waited behind the statue in the Room of the Doors, when he came down from the turret, knowing there was no other way from the turret by which she might return to the main part of the house. No wonder the statue had trembled with Paul creeping behind it! He had gone almost at her heels down the stairs and out the garden door. But how disgusted with himself he had been, and how furious with poor Jane, when she played that trick with the key and he found himself locked in and Jane free in the garden.

When he made sure she would not answer his cries to her, he rushed up into the house and out through one of the drawing-room windows.

But he was too late. He did not find her in the garden.

Then he had gone to his sister, Mrs. Merriman, deciding to make a clean breast of his more than suspicions of Jane. Until that minute he had hoped to save her somehow from any one's finding out what she had done. But Mrs. Merriman had paid little attention to his bracelet worries. Instead, she had become almost distracted to learn that Paul had not gone with Jane on her walk along the cliff on Nora's behalf. She was tremendously concerned about Jane's safety. "Follow her," she had urged. "Run, Paul. Straight to Harmony Cove. She should never have gone alone to a gypsy encampment."

And Paul had run. Then he had heard her singing, though he could not see her through the fog. And here they were.

"And you are shivering. We must get back quickly."

Skillfully he helped her disentangle herself from her knotted shawl. He put his own Norfolk jacket on her, and over that wrapped the shawl, turning her about and doing her up like a mummy until she protested. She appeased his curiosity about her bare legs and the shawl by

explaining about the gypsies. He was very angry for her, that they had treated her so, and that pleased Jane, although she had some time ago quite got over being angry on her own account.

As they started toward Surfgate, he said, a little ashamedly, "Now, if you'll renew last night's offer, Jane, I'll really come into partnership with you. Since you haven't it, the loss of the bracelet looks even more serious than ever. It is very valuable, you know. And I've got to get to work. I hate to think what a fool I've been and how I have wasted time."

"I guess we're even," Jane responded. "Didn't you save my life? I'm all for solving the mystery too." But she did not confide in him, even so, the fact that she had just about made up her mind that the unbelievable was true, and that Beryl must certainly be the guilty person. Instead, she said, "Have you thought about Mrs. Merriman herself at all? Aren't there some things suspicious there?"

"My sister! Hardly! But why?"

"Oh, don't you remember how I saw her Chinese shawl, and someone in it, leaning at the back of the piano, watching Beryl play? Then she vanished."

"Yes, I remember you said so. But you were mistaken about it, for she told me that she went right up to her room after you arrived and lay down to get over a headache. She threw the scarf over her as a blanket, and so, you see, no one could have worn it besides herself, for she did not go to sleep, and there it lay all the time."

"But the Chinese shawl isn't all. There are other things that make me wonder about her. Last night she was all out of patience with the fuss being made over the bracelet. She acted as though its loss didn't really matter so much. Don't you remember? And just now, you say yourself, a little while back, when you told her you thought I was a thief—oh, yes, you did!—well, that I had the bracelet then—she didn't pay any attention to that. She wasn't interested. She was merely anxious about me. What do you make of that?"

"I see your point. But, even so, I think you're all off. You see, she's my sister and I know her. She is flighty, sort of, and unpredictable always, and different from the usual run of people. But she is very fond of Miss Williams, really. She wouldn't let her be bothered if she could help it. One can be fond of Aunt, you know. I am myself, quite unreasonably."

Jane looked straight ahead and walked faster. It was rather tactless of her, certainly, to have held his own sister up to this young man as one possibly implicated in a theft. She had done it in order to keep from telling him about her suspicions, her serious suspicions of Beryl; for she had decided to behave toward Beryl as Paul had behaved toward herself, when he was suspecting her. He had followed her around and given her a chance to confide, and he had offered his help. She thought that she and Beryl, between them, if Beryl would trust her, ought to be able to hit upon some way of returning the bracelet without any one being any the wiser, even Paul, as to who had taken it.

But Jane began to think that she had been more clever than she realized in what she had just suggested to Paul. Really and truly, there were as many reasons for suspecting Mrs. Merriman as for suspecting Beryl. And Max Colt was not out of it either, not by a long shot. Why, they hadn't even begun to untangle the mystery.

"What about that wind and the noise of the surf in my room last night?" she asked as they hurried along.

Paul grunted. "Last night," he admitted, "of course, I thought you were stringing me

with all that ghostly stuff. I simply admired you for your powers of invention. Did you tell that just as it happened, all of it, Jane?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is mighty queer. The Blue Room couldn't have got any of the wind last night. It was all from the east. And even during the worst storms you don't hear the sea there. That is a mystery. Why, it's more mysterious than the disappearance of the bracelet!"

Jane shuddered. "The gypsy warned me that there was mystery. She said——"

But they had very nearly reached Surfgate by this time, and now Mrs. Merriman and Nora came hurrying out the kitchen door to meet them. Mrs. Merriman's expression depicted enormous relief, and Nora's was one beam of friendship.

But when Mrs. Merriman had had time and come near enough to realize the condition of the watched-for couple, she was immediate consternation. "Whatever has happened?" she cried. "Well, don't stop to explain now. Get right into the house. Nora, run as fast as you can and get some hot-water bottles, and tell Cook to make a pitcher of hot lemonade. My poor dear child!"

She had Jane by the arm, and hurried her in through the kitchen door and up the back stairs to the second story. There, as it happened, they encountered no one in the hall. In about two minutes Mrs. Merriman and Nora between them had Jane out of her soaking wet clothes and into her nightgown and an eiderdown bed jacket of Mrs. Merriman's. Then they tucked her into bed, pillows heaped high at her back, hot water bottles about her legs and feet, and a fire blazing in the grate.

Not until then would Mrs. Merriman allow Jane to describe her adventures. While she did describe them, Mrs. Merriman sat astounded on one side of her bed, and Nora stood at the foot, even more astounded, drinking in every word, apparently, through her open mouth.

"Glory be to the Saints!" Nora exclaimed at the end. "It was a terrible close shave all about!"

Mrs. Merriman turned and looked at Nora as though she agreed heartily. "You must stay in bed for lunch," she commanded Jane, with affectionate firmness. "I'll make some excuse for you downstairs at the table. You were chilled through. I'm going to leave you in Nora's care now. My aunt has discharged her—egged on

to it by me—and Nora is going to stay with me. Ring this bell if you want anything, and she will come. I think now you should rest and even try to sleep if you can—at least drowse off a little after lunch."

"But I don't want to stay in bed! I don't see how I ever got into bed like this so quickly. You did it almost without my knowing." Jane felt protesting, though grateful. Bed in the middle of the day! And she was warm and comfortable already.

Mrs. Merriman laughed. "Did we? Well, you got off alone to that wild gypsy tryst quite without my knowing. It's tit for tat, it seems. But, seriously, my dear, you will stay here snug in bed for luncheon, at any rate?"

Jane had to agree. "Only may Nora find Beryl and send her here to see me?" Jane begged.

"If you really want her. But I wouldn't tell Beryl, if I were you, about your adventures. Not yet, not until the bracelet mystery is cleared up. She might resent, and the others might resent, that I had let you take that walk, when they are cooped up and not let even into the garden. It was thoughtless of me to let you go, even

when I thought Paul would be with you. It wasn't quite fair to the others."

Jane felt ashamed. Of course, she herself had behaved very badly. It really wasn't Mrs. Merriman's fault. Not a bit. Mrs. Merriman saw the flush on her face and bent above her, smoothing back her damp curls. "There!" she soothed. "Don't worry. Everything is bound to come right. And we'll send Beryl to you right away."

Then they went out, closing the door behind them. Jane was instantly sorry for that. Somehow, she didn't at all like being left alone in this haunted chamber, with the door shut and the sound of Mrs. Merriman's and Nora's feet growing fainter and fainter down the hall. What if it *was* broad daylight and a cheerful fire blazing on her hearth! It was still the Blue Room, the room which from the very first she had felt to be mysterious and uncanny. Suppose last night's wind should begin to blow again, and the surf should come pounding on the foot-board of her bed! Would it make it any pleasanter because it was daytime? She didn't think so. Last night Jane had not been able to see the mysterious things taking place in her room. But now she would be perfectly well

able to see whatever might happen. That might be infinitely more frightening.

It was an unfriendly room, the Blue Room. She was as sure of that as of the fact that she was lying in the exact center of the great luxurious bed, propped against lacy pillows, looking about with eyes opened a little too wide to be altogether natural!

CHAPTER XVI

A YELLOW ROSE

THE minutes dragged and brought neither Beryl's arrival nor the wind from nowhere. After a little while of strained attention Jane grinned to herself, a trifle ashamedly, and called herself an idiot. Why was she afraid? There was just no sense in such a state of mind, and she was famous for her sense, or, rather, fondly imagined that she was. So at last she snuggled back against her pillows, snuggled her shoulders in and her head, relaxed her whole spine, and rested. She became conscious of gratitude for the comfort of the hot-water bottles and for the murmuring fire.

And then it came. A knock on her door. Jane did not sit up or stir; but her heart had given one great leap, and now it was racing. She was certain it was not Beryl, for Beryl, under no circumstances that Jane was capable of imagining, would knock on any door in just that way. It was a fumbling, sneaky sort of

knock. For the life of her Jane could not open her lips and say, "Come in." For what would come in if she did? Her terrified mind would not help her with imagination. Her fears were fears of a blank, of the unknown.

Then it came again, more fumbling, more sneaky than before if that were possible. If it were Beryl, she would call out, of course. But Beryl would scarcely have waited to knock in any case. She was the impulsive, bursting-in sort.

Jane's eyes had shifted to the door, but her head had not turned the fraction of an inch. She saw that the door was beginning to open, ever so slowly and cautiously. Jane wished it would hurry up. Anything is better than not knowing. But her wishes did not hurry it. The door opened creepingly, creepingly.

And there, to Jane's utter amazement, was Beryl bending forward, in a crouched, wary attitude. Jane was lying in such a way that her dressing gown, thrown over a chair at the side of her bed, very nearly concealed her from the door. But she could see Beryl plainly enough through a little crack between the sleeve and the body of the gown as it hung on the chair back.

But though Beryl did not appear to see Jane,

or indeed look directly at the bed at all, she did hear Jane's gasp. The faint sound of that made her jump—like a rabbit startled in the woods. And then the ridiculous, the outlandish thing came about. Beryl thrust her hand into the pocket of her jersey dress and it came out sparkling. A swift motion, and flashes of light went rolling along the floor, making a curve around to the bed. It was the magnificent, the gorgeous jeweled bracelet!

But by the time that Jane had discovered exactly what it was that had been thrown, Beryl had fled, without having seen Jane, it seemed. But Jane was out of bed and after her, dragging on her dressing gown as she ran. She flung wide her door and looked both ways. Her friend was nowhere in the hall. But Nora was tripping blithely toward her from the direction of the stairs carrying some knitting.

She was surprised enough to find Jane panting there in the hall. "Have you seen Beryl? Did she pass you? Or did you see her going in at some door, or was it the other direction?" she begged, all in one breath.

"No, I couldn't find Miss Cosgrave. No one could. We can't think where she's gone to."

"But she was here, now, in my room. She just

this instant ran out. You must have seen her."

Nora looked at Jane sharply, as though suspecting that she had really become ill from her exposure and was delirious. "Oh, Miss Jane," she begged, "get back to bed, there's a darlin'. Nora's going to sit right here in this chair by your door and knit so if you want anything."

Jane stamped her foot. "I'm not a baby, Nora," she cried. "And I tell you, you *must* have seen Beryl."

"I must have seen her if she came out of your room as you say she did, but there's been no one in the hall. I'd better get Mrs. Merriman, I'm thinking."

"Oh, no, you'd better not. She's been bothered enough. I'm sorry I spoke to you as I did, Nora. Perhaps I was dreaming. I will go back to bed, for I promised Mrs. Merriman to stay there till after lunch, didn't I? You're going to stay here?"

"Yes. And ring if there's the least thing you want, miss."

"Thank you very much, Nora."

Jane closed the door very carefully behind her. Very slowly, almost as though she were afraid of it, she crossed the floor and picked up the bracelet. She stood in a daze, a daze that

was pierced with sheer admiration of the lovely thing.

Then she jumped, much as Beryl had jumped a minute or so ago, and leapt into bed, thrusting the bracelet in deep under the pillows. She had heard voices at her door, Nora's and Grace's. Nora opened the door then, and Grace came in, bearing proudly, in the manner of a waiter in a hotel, a try with Jane's luncheon on it.

"I wouldn't let any one else bring it!" she cried, smiling at Jane fondly. "And everyone's so sorry you're not feeling well. You poor dear, what is the matter? Mother was so vague!"

"Oh, nothing much. I've got sort of a cold I guess, or a chill, or something. But I'm only staying up here because your mother made me promise. I'm getting up right after luncheon."

"Really. That's funny of mother. She's not usually so fussy. But things are going so—oddly. It seems to me that I've spent most of the morning looking around for you and Beryl. Beryl did show up for a little while, and played 'Simon Says' with us. I do adore 'Simon Says,' though I'm a pill at it. Don't you? But then she vanished again. It was a pity, for we went up into the attic and played Volley Ball. The boys beat us, of course. Only, tell me, where

have you been all the time, Jane? Not here, for I came to the door several times and looked in."

Jane replied to the difficult question in her most casual, kind manner. "Oh, hither and yon, all over your haunted house, Gracie. Sort of exploring. More fun than games. Your veiled lady is a sketch, isn't she?"

"You're as bad as Paul. I can't get a thing out of him, either. I only hope, since you weren't with the rest of us, that you two were together. Isn't he *wonderful?"*

Grace had put the tray down on the bedside table and stood with clasped hands waiting complacently for Jane's enthusiasm. But Jane did not respond in the way Grace expected. She merely chuckled a little, and then asked, "Where did you get that rose? It is a perfect beauty, Grace!"

A yellow rose, a very perfect and exquisite specimen of a rose, lay across the napkin on Jane's tray.

"Oh, Paul sent you that. He tore out of the conservatory as I came past and said, 'Give this to your friend with my compliments.' I say, Jane, Paul must like you quite a lot. Now I'm going to arrange your pillows all over again."

"Oh, no, you're not!" Jane spoke firmly,

spreading out her arms across the lacy pillows at her back. Her face, if Grace had noticed, had gone quite red.

"Oh, but I am. Mother did them, I can see that. She's not a bit good at this sort of thing. They're all hard and pokey. This is what they need."

Grace was persisting in her intention. Disregarding Jane's stiff, protesting arms, she began punching up the pillows, hauling at them and poking. And then, of course, the bracelet rolled out on to the floor.

Grace dropped her eyes to it and stood speechless. Jane was speechless too. Then Grace picked up the sparkling thing, and for some long seconds both girls merely looked at it as it lay winking its fiery eyes malevolently—or so it seemed to Jane.

It was Jane who broke the unbearable silence. "Well, why don't you say something?" she asked.

Grace lifted her eyes. Jane saw that they were swimming in tears. "Well, Jane Dyke," Grace said. "I don't believe you took the bracelet. I know you aren't a thief. I don't think you even knew it was there under your pillows."

"No, I'm not a thief. And I didn't touch the bracelet—not to take it. But, of course, I did know it was under the pillows. Didn't I try to keep you from disturbing them?"

But Jane's heart had warmed to this little girl—for really that was all Grace was—who stood here so loyally refusing to believe ill of her friend. "I'm *her* friend too, now," Jane promised herself. "It's not going to remain one-sided any longer. She's a little sport."

She was ready for Grace's question when it came in the natural course of things. "Tell me how it ever happened. Then I'll take it right down to Aunt. Won't she be relieved, though!"

Jane shook her head. "That's just what I can't do," she said firmly. "I can't tell you anything about it—not until I have seen Paul, at any rate. He and I are in a sort of a partnership in this affair. I sha'n't know what to do till I've talked to him. I'll eat my lunch now, as I promised your mother I would, in bed. But then I'll jump into my clothes and go down. Where can I meet Paul so no one else will know? I've got to see him alone, right away."

Grace considered it. "Of course, the old nursery is the ideal place," she said, musingly. "But the door has been closed and locked for a

year, and mother has lost the key. So that's no good."

"I should think not. Try again."

"Well, the next best place, if you want really not to be interrupted, is Aunt Augusta's boudoir, next door."

"Heaven forbid!" Jane ejaculated. "Do be a little cleverer, my dear. How about the conservatory?"

They decided on the conservatory, and Grace hurried away to give Paul Jane's summons and have her own luncheon. Before she went she laid the bracelet trustfully on Jane's palm.

"You're a darling!" Jane cried in deep earnest. Grace's eyes shone and her face beamed contentment. But, "No, I'm not," she denied modestly. "Just at first, just for an instant, I was afraid you were—were—were a sort of a thief, you know."

"Yes, I guessed you did. But you were a darling even then. For, instead of being self-righteous and high-hat, you *cried*. I'll always remember that."

"That's because I like you so much," Grace said, simply.

"Of course it is. And I repeat, you are a darling—darling!"

But left alone with her delicious luncheon, Jane had a sudden, an appalling thought. Would Paul have Grace's simple faith? He had taken Jane's own word that she was not a thief quickly enough, that was true. But now that Grace had discovered the bracelet under her pillows—under her very pillows—wasn't it expecting a good deal of such a new friendship as hers and Paul's to count on his believing the facts as she was going to tell them to him?

She looked at her tray without interest now. Chicken salad garnished with tomato, her favorite salad! Hot chocolate, crispy-crust rolls, and a big tender baked potato, with plenty of butter and salt and pepper for it. And for dessert there were strawberries, out of season, and thick cream.

She couldn't stay uninterested long, not in the face of all her favorite things to eat and the really violent exercise she had had that morning.

And the yellow rose, more beautiful, she thought, than all the jewels of that silly bracelet taken together, added to her appetite. And so, when she put the tray back on the bedside table, she had consumed a very respectable meal, in spite of her excitement and anxiety.

The jersey frock she had put on that morning

had been taken away by Nora for a drying and pressing in the laundry, and so she found herself rather in a quandary as to what dress she should wear this afternoon, for she had had only that one warm dress with her. But she had no choice, really. She had to get into a semi-evening frock which she had intended for the tea hour at Surfgate, if that rite should prove to be a formal one. It was bright cherry, made of soft silk and wisping chiffon, its only decorations a low black velvet girdle, and on the left shoulder a hard little round bob of cherries. Black velvet pumps went with it, and white silk hose. Paul's yellow rose she tucked into the girdle to give her cheer and keep her company.

She looked at herself in the mirror with a worried frown. She did hope, heartily, that Paul wouldn't imagine she had "gotten herself up" like this because she wanted to.

But down in the conservatory (fortunately she reached it, following Grace's directions, before the household had come out of the dining room) Jane gave herself up to much more poignant anxieties than those concerning the appropriateness of her costume. What would Paul's expression be when he came to meet her? Would it be the old quizzical, skeptical look, or the

new merry, friendly one? And even if he still believed in her (but how could he!), would they be able, between them, to protect Beryl?

With hands crossed behind her back, as was her way when bothered, Jane paced up and down the warm, pungent alleys of the conservatory. It seemed hours that there was no sound but the fall of her own slow feet. And then, when at last she heard other footsteps, and standing on tiptoes peered through a high box of flowering azaleas to make certain it really was Paul, a new emotion swept over her. It was shyness. Swiftly she pulled his rose from her girdle. He needn't find her wearing that, anyway, not if he thought her a thief. And besides, yellow with cherry!

He had reached the row of Japanese trees now, and in a moment he must see her. Swift as thought, she turned and thrust the stem of the yellow rose into the moist earth behind a little low red rose bush. It wouldn't die there, and neither would Paul be likely to see it and realize that she had worn it down. If Jane had any touch of sentimentality, it was about flowers; she had a care for their happiness and well-being. And now she was glad that the lovely rose that had cheered her lonely lunch should

not suffer because of a possible quarrel with its donor.

Jane whisked about just in time to face Mr. Paul Waul as he came around the end of the row of Japanese trees.

CHAPTER XVII

A BOB OF CHERRIES

AND she began talking at once. "If I were a heroine in fiction, Mr. Waul," she said (she had been making up this speech while she waited), "I'd take the blame upon myself now and swear that I stole the bracelet. But I'm not a heroine. I'm in real life, and things go differently there, I notice. So I am going to tell on my very best friend in all the world. It's never done, is it?"

She tried to laugh, but after all, she was too deeply concerned as to what he would say or do now to manage that. But she did accomplish a smile, though rather an odd one. His first words, however, gave her heart. He said, "Please don't Mr. Waul me—Paul me. Grace has told me about finding the bracelet. Where is it now?"

Jane fished down her neck for it where she had it in safe keeping, and handed it to him. He pocketed it coolly, hardly glancing at it.

"That's that," he commented. "Now, fire ahead. We mustn't waste time. And, thank Heaven! you *aren't* a fiction heroine, Jane Dyke, but a girl in real life. Fiction-heroining it would be merely complicating things at this point, wouldn't it? Though I must say you look something in the part."

In truth, Jane did. Her short curls were ruffled and pushed back from her forehead by her nervous fingers quite out of their usual modish contours, and in the manner of Pola Negri's more tragic moments; her cheeks were cherry, like her frock, and her hazel eyes had gone inky with fatigue and emotion.

She told Paul how Beryl had come so stealthily to her bedroom door, thrown the bracelet across the floor, and then run away. And she added, "I have suspected Beryl—well, quite a lot, from various things, though I hadn't meant to tell you. Just the same, she isn't a thief. I know that. I *know*. She is just sort of queer. Always was. You see, she's a dreamer, and often I tease her about being sentimental and different from the rest of us. And I've got a theory about the bracelet. If it reminded her of your sister, Alfreda Waul's playing—and she told us it did, remember!—well,

that might be explanation enough. She might feel it belonged to her. Affinities, or something like that. Anyway, she'd hate to see your aunt wearing it—begging your pardon—I can imagine. I've sort of figured it out that she just swept it up with her handkerchief, when she finished playing, on impulse, you know; then, afterward, when everyone made such a fuss, she got scared and wouldn't own up.—But how she vanished like that—that's what puzzles me. Was she at lunch?"

Paul nodded. His face was a study in gloom. "Yes, she was at lunch all right, and as cool as a cucumber. Nothing worries her, apparently. But she'd better worry! I'm not so easy on that girl as you are, Jane, though it may be all just as you say. I can't see that that helps her much, though. You say she's your chum, and Grace has told me she is too. And yet she did her best to get you into pretty serious trouble, leaving the bracelet in your room like that. You say she didn't see you were there?"

"Why, Paul Waul!" Jane was amazed at his conclusions. "Beryl didn't know it was my room, of course. Don't you see how it was? Someone had told her it was your aunt's room. She was simply returning the bracelet, when she thought

everyone was downstairs for lunch, in the only way she dared. I've got the Blue Room, you know, Miss Williams's!"

"Yes, I know. Everyone, pretty well, knows that, I should say. Aunt has mentioned it now and then! So who is there who could have given Miss Cosgrave such wrong information?"

Paul's face had not lightened. Plainly, he thought Beryl had behaved abominably. Jane took a step nearer him. She looked up into his skeptical eyes. You were ready to think the best of me you could when you believed *I* had taken the bracelet," she pleaded. "Why can't you think the best of Beryl too?"

He laughed, rather oddly. "You are you," he said quickly. "That makes everything different—all the world different." And then, after a pause, during which Jane's heart beat so loudly that she kept herself with difficulty from laying her hand over it in a tell-tale gesture, he added, "But there are some mysteries still. There's that wind you felt last night. And the sound of the surf. And Nora's not having seen Beryl in the hall before lunch. Do you know—— Yes, it might be—— Something must——"

"Yes—yes? Do go on."

"There's something I haven't told you because it seemed too unreasonable. But there might be an explanation of those strange occurrences. Have you noticed the tapestry hanging opposite the door of the Blue Room? Well, behind that tapestry there is a secret door. It opens into the nursery wing of the house. It was a whim of my father's. If that door had got open somehow last night, it might explain the wind and all that, you see, for the nursery wing shoots right out on to the cliff, almost over the ocean. But how the door could get open, I don't see. For, two years ago, or more, it was bolted up from the other side. I helped in the bolting myself. Now, to undo our work on that door a person would have to get into the shut-off wing by another way. There's only one such way—a little door in the drawing room back of the piano behind the screen there. It's a ridiculous door, really. You have to bend almost double in stepping through, and the step goes down into a queer circular well, and there is a twisty, narrow staircase—it looks like a staircase built for a child—that goes up to the nursery wing. But that way's inaccessible too now, has been for months, ever since Mrs. Merriman lost the key. It doesn't really matter, because the wing is no

more use to us. The rooms are dismantled and shut up. That's why no one has gotten around to getting some keys made, I suppose. No, that's not the reason, come to think of it——"

He stopped suddenly and struck his forehead with the palm of his hand in a dramatic gesture. "That's not the reason. Not a bit of it. We're not such a shiftless family as all that. Every time the subject has come up my sister, Mrs. Merriman, has said most emphatically that if we open up the wing, or even merely have it openable, it will just naturally become part of the house again and make more work for the servants. Surfgate's much too big for us as it is, you know. But my sister has been more emphatic about this little matter than she is apt to be about even important things."

But Jane had paid only half-hearted attention to Paul's last sentences, her mind was so taken up with his disclosure about the secret door. "If there is a secret door behind that tapestry," she cried now, "that *is* where the wind came from, of course. Well, I'm glad to have that explained. But who opened the door and let the wind through? Who was prowling about at that time of night? That needs some explanation, don't you think?"

"Decidedly, I do think! But it's hard for me to believe the door was actually opened, because early this morning I went up to examine it, before the household was stirring. The bolts on the other side were apparently in good order still, for I couldn't budge it. I know the trick, of course. And it simply didn't work. *The door was held.*"

"But mightn't the person, whoever it is who did come out of that door last night, letting through the wind and the noise of the ocean and all—mightn't that mysterious person have bolted it again when he or she went back?" Jane felt that compared to her partner in detecting she was positively brilliant. But Paul pricked her bubble of conceit.

"I don't see that," he said. "At least, I don't see it unless the person had found the lost key to the little door into the drawing room, and after he bolted the secret door he came down the stairs and through into the drawing room, locking that door behind him. For, whoever it was, Jane, it must be someone of this household. What puzzles me beyond words is why any one should behave so secretively. What could the purpose be of all this creeping about in the middle of the night? And, even supposing

someone had found the lost key, or even had had a key made, what use could he make of that drafty, empty old wing, without heat in it or electric light? It's all too absurd."

"Your sister probably has her reasons," Jane said wisely. "Why not ask her?"

Paul stared. "Not so fast," he urged. "We've got to be cautious, like regular detectives. At least I am bound to be cautious, Jane, after my idiotic initial mistake concerning yourself. It is perfectly true that my sister is the person who lost the key to the little staircase, and it is true that she has protested against anything being done to replace it. But that doesn't necessarily mean that she has some dark purpose in her actions."

Jane, however, was quite impatient with her partner's slowness. "Oh, don't you see the rest?" she urged. "Everything begins to fit into a pattern so beautifully. She stood behind the piano while Beryl was playing. Then she vanished. I saw her vanish. And I know that it was she because of the Chinese scarf, I tell you. She had to go through that little door behind the screen. There was no other way out for her that I would not have seen her take. But even more than that, don't you know yourself, Paul

Waul, that all good detective stories always turn out this way. It is always and inevitably that the very unlikeliest person of all is the guilty one. It never fails!"

Paul threw back his head and laughed heartily, though softly, for fear of attracting attention to the conservatory. It annoyed Jane, but she waited for him to answer. "I get your points," he admitted. "But as you said, a little while back, we aren't in fiction but in real life. But even if this were merely a story, this especial story might not go true to form. There are exceptions to every rule. And naturally, too, though you have forgotten it, I would rather not find my sister acting so—so—so underhandedly. But there are two things against your theories. First, Mrs. Merriman went to her room with a headache before ever Beryl began to play, and she didn't come down again until dinner time. Second, she was early in getting down to luncheon to-day, while Beryl was late. You agree, don't you, that since Beryl must have somehow got through the secret door this noon when she was running away from the Blue Room, someone must have helped her do so. For Beryl of herself would know nothing about the door. That connects the someone up with

the disappearance of the bracelet. Well, if that someone was in league with Beryl, it couldn't have been my sister, for the simple reason that my sister was one of the very few people who knew at the minute that you, Jane, were in the Blue Room in bed. Isn't that simple?"

Jane saw, and was duly humbled.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Paul ejaculated, after he had taken a little walk out and back, the length of the azalea boxes, while Jane waited, racking her brains in silence. "We'll go down into the vegetable garden. You've got the key, haven't you? Out there we can get up on to the wall under the nursery wing. I think it will be possible for us to get on up from the wall into a window. We'll do it even if we have to smash one. It is as plain as day that Beryl and the bracelet and some accomplice of Beryl's and that shut-up wing of Surfgate are somehow all involved in this mystery which you and I have set ourselves to solve. That is so, isn't it?"

Jane sighed with satisfaction. Hurrah! At last they were going to *do* something.

The key to the garden door was up in the Blue Room on Jane's dressing table. Paul had better fetch it, rather than Jane, and then, if

their luck held, no one need know that Jane was up and about yet. They needed privacy now, if this detective business was to be a success, Paul felt. Of course, Nora knew that Jane had come downstairs, for Jane had relieved her of her watch at the door as she came out of the Blue Room. But the chances were pretty even that Nora wouldn't happen to mention it to any one who could interfere with their present plans; in all likelihood she was down in the servants' dining room at this minute having her lunch, safely out of the way.

And things went as they had planned and hoped that they would. Paul found the key and returned with it to the conservatory without any one stopping him or paying any particular attention to him. A door from the conservatory opened directly into the Room of Doors. So without any further delay at all, they got safely through and down the stairs to the garden.

For the while it was not raining. In their eagerness to get down to practical work, the two detectives took hold of hands and ran along a path, close to the wall of the house, toward the ocean, until they came to the edge of the garden, and a high stone wall. Paul went up it ahead, and then, sitting astride, reached a hand down

for Jane. In an instant she was beside him. In their excitement and pleasure in action neither of them gave a thought to Jane's fragile frock, a most unsuitable costume for the work in hand. Their hearts were beating high with expectation.

The nursery wing jutted out at right angles just above the place on the wall where they now stood, holding hands and looking up. One window, wide ledged, was let into the wing about six feet above their heads and just a little to the left. Paul trusted himself to the strong vine which clambered thickly all over this side of the wing. Jane held her breath, but he got safely up on to the ledge, and sat there, his back against the window pane, his arms, behind him, working at the edges of the window. It was not locked. This was fortune. Paul threw a leg over the sill and disappeared from sight.

And then fortune turned. Jane heard steps beneath her in the garden. Of all bad luck in the world! Aunt Augusta was here again, taking her after-luncheon constitutional. She was walking solemnly down the path that Jane and Paul had just run down so blithely. In another instant she would certainly lift her eyes and see Jane kneeling there on the wall. Horrible.

But on she came, and she did not lift her eyes. "If only I can stay without stirring," Jane comforted herself, "she may turn just under me here where the path turns and go on without noticing." She did not even move her head to see if Paul had come back to the window and was aware of their danger. She stayed as still as a rabbit stays when the hunters say it has "frozen."

And it worked. All happened just as Jane had hoped—almost. But the almost made just the difference. Aunt Augusta came tramping on, so absorbed in her own thoughts, thoughts of the lost bracelet, probably, that she had no eyes for the cherry figure silhouetted directly ahead of her against the sky. She would have come and passed on like that, and never looked up, it is probable, if the funny little bob of cherries at Jane's shoulder hadn't here entered into the drama. Aunt Augusta did get as far as the turn. She did even make the turn. And then she stopped, dead. For suddenly there had dropped from above on to her old felt hat something that went "blob" and then bounced off on to the ground at her feet. It was a little round bob of shiny cherries.

Jane said afterward that she was shaking so in terror of Aunt Augusta that the cherries simply

got shaken free of their stitches. But, however it had happened, there they lay now, a brilliant chunk of color on the dark wet gravel directly between the square toes of Aunt Augusta's sensible walking boots.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

THE cherries were so lifelike that it was just possible Aunt Augusta expected, when she looked up, to see a cherry tree grown there, like Jack's bean stalk, overnight. But whatever she expected, her astounded expression showed, for all who ran to read, that it was not Jane, and Jane in an evening dress, low neck and very short sleeves, kneeling on the garden wall, she was prepared for. And Jane, still in the clutch of bad fortune, chuckled. Nothing in the world, at that instant, could have kept her from chuckling for Aunt Augusta completely amazed was Aunt Augusta completely ridiculous. Jane's chuckle released the old lady's tongue.

"Well, I might have known," she stormed. "I might have known that if someone was throwing things at me it would be you. Fortunately, your missile has not put my eyes out, but landed quite harmlessly on my hat. No

thanks to you for that! And what are you doing up on that wall in a dancing frock?—Well, it's all of a piece with the rest. I——"

But Jane interrupted. "It wasn't a missile. How can you think such a thing? It was the trimming off my dress, and it just fell. I——"

"Very well. Very well. But what about your promise to stay in the house? The others are keeping their words. My sister shall hear of this. Mr. Waul, too, he——"

But here Mr. Waul spoke for himself, leaning out of the first window of the wing. "Don't worry, Aunt," he said in a very matter-of-fact voice, howbeit a rather low one. "It's perfectly all right. Jane and I were merely taking a walk in the garden again. Jane is particularly interested in vegetables, I think. Anyway, this is where she likes to walk. And naturally, if she leaves the house, I must escort her. But she certainly has no intention of bothering you, and of course she didn't throw those cherries at you."

Aunt Augusta, in her fresh amazement over the appearance of Paul at that upper window of the closed wing of the house, had backed off into a bed of currant bushes. "Paul Waul!" she ejaculated. "Have you gone stark living crazy?"

And then, to cap the whole matter, as though

the heavens themselves were a little crazy, without any warning came a downpour from the clouds—straight, heavy rain. Floods of it! Aunt Augusta extricated herself from the embrace of the currant bushes and went striding with all speed back on the path toward the door. She did not look about to see what was becoming of Jane in her finery on the high garden wall. She probably thought that a good soaking would be good for Jane's soul.

But Jane was not really suffering. She put a foot up into the vine, took one step up, and then Paul's hand reached hers. The rest was easy. They stood together on the dry side of the window in a warm room.

"But this isn't a nursery!" Jane cried. "Why, it's a boudoir!"

"Sh! Sh! Whisper!" Paul hissed.

But Jane was justified. Paul had said that the nursery wing had been shut up, dismantled, and even the electric lights shut off. And all the time, here they were in a lovely apartment, done all in ivory and gold and black. There were gilt chairs, and a lounge heaped with black satin cushions, a black velvet rug, ivory and black hangings. (These hung well back against the wall, however, not to be seen from outside.)

But, most surprising of all, an electric stove in the semblance of a burning log sent forth cheer and heat from the depth of a black and ivory tiled fireplace.

"Yes, I know," Paul whispered. "It's too utterly amazing. I thought, in Aunt Augusta's own words for it, that I was 'stark living crazy' when I got in here and saw all this. That's why I was so long in coming to your rescue, Jane. I just stood here and stared and didn't know at all what you were in for down below. But this whole plot is getting pretty thick. I'm glad you are with me, that we're in on it together. It begins to look as though you are right and someone in the Merriman family, or at least some member of the household, is mixed up in the bracelet mystery along with your friend Beryl. But listen to that rain! That's some downpour!"

"Ought we to be here at all?" Jane asked, very much concerned. "We came in at the window like thieves."

"I know. I feel that way myself. But I never dreamed there would be anything here but our old playroom swathed in dust sheets. You see this wing belongs to us—to us children. I didn't know I'd be intruding. What shall we do, though? We can't go out in that rain. Shall

we go on and see if any one's here?" He indicated a door at the opposite side of the room.

"Hadn't we better just stay right where we are, and wait until the rain lets up a little?" Jane asked.

"Well, I don't know about that. Look here. Whoever is responsible for that fire, whoever makes use of this room—well, *that* is the person who opened the secret door behind the tapestry that let Beryl through when she ran away from the Blue Room a little while ago. And we know what Beryl's errand was, don't we? She was bent on depositing the stolen (or let us say the vanished) bracelet in the Blue Room. Well, think about it a little. Beryl is your chum. You feel certain that she wouldn't have dreamed of leaving the bracelet in the Blue Room if she thought it was your room. It really looks as though she imagined that Aunt Augusta was occupying that room, as she usually does. Or rather, it looks as though someone else must have thought this and have told Beryl. That someone else couldn't be Mrs. Merriman, could it, since she knew that it was your room for this week-end, and she knew, even, that you were in bed in there at the very minute. On the other hand, who but my sister could have turned this

old schoolroom into a boudoir! It is all too utterly weird."

But Jane's answer to all this reasoning was merely, "I do think the rain is letting up. Let's get out."

"No, wait a minute. There are the servants to be considered now. This may have been here, this furniture and everything, for a year or more. There's Morris. He's a deep one, or he might be a deep one. Jane, I say, this is becoming positively fascinating. Let's go ahead and clear it all up."

"All right. It is exciting, isn't it!"

They went across the room together. After an instant's pause, his ear bent to the paneling, Paul threw the door open. There was only darkness there, wind and the pounding of the surf against rock. Paul took Jane's hand, and they went forward and stood in a cold dark place. A window was open ahead of them, somewhere, for Jane felt the wet east wind on her face, blowing her curls. It felt and sounded exactly as it had felt and sounded last night in her room when the door blew open. Only now she wasn't the least bit frightened, not with Paul holding her hand.

"We're in a passage," Paul spoke above the

noise the surf made. "The secret door is right behind you there. Somebody likes fresh air, I'll say. Well, let's push on."

But now, above the surf's racket, Jane suddenly heard music. A piano! Paul heard it too. He stopped, utterly at a loss. And then, as a possible explanation of everything dawned on him, he laughed.

"What is it?" Jane asked eagerly, for she felt that he had come to some very definite conclusion.

"Wait a minute, just a minute," he said quickly. "Come on, Jane, let's make more music than the piano is making." And he began to sing at the top of his lungs, swinging Jane's arm in time with the tune. Entering into his spirit, though not understanding it, Jane joined in heartily, for he was singing her own song:

"There were three gypsies a-come to my door,
And downstairs ran this a-lady, O!
And one sang high, and another sang low,
And another sang, 'Bonny, bonny Biscay, O!' "

At the final "O!" which they shouted at the top of their lungs, an electric light bulb bloomed directly over their heads, and simultaneously a

door just a little way in front of them burst open. In the doorway stood a tall, beautiful woman in flowing draperies, a gorgeous red and gold Chinese shawl knotted on one shoulder!

"Paul Waul!" the vision exclaimed with extremest exasperation. "I might have known. Why have you come to spoil everything?"

So she might have spoken if the young man standing there before her were a very little man of five; and so, very likely, she had had many an occasion to speak to him when he was that tender age; for in spite of her appearance of being a very young lady, this was Alfreda Waul, Paul's famous sister, ten years older than himself.

In Jane's surprise at the sudden bursting forth of light and bursting open of the door, she had quite forgotten that she and Paul were holding hands. And so there they stood, those two, like two naughty children, caught in mischief, giving each other comfort. Over Alfreda Waul's shoulder Jane could see into the room beyond. It was a luxurious room, notable for shelves and shelves of books. But Jane had no interest in the room, for she was completely absorbed by looking at the person sitting on the piano bench before a grand piano, a person who was turned halfway about, looking at Jane with almost as

much surprise as Jane herself was displaying. It was Beryl. And it was Beryl's music, of course, that they had heard a minute ago.

"Sorry to break into your concert," Paul was saying merrily. "But you see I have been engaged as a detective to recover *your* disappearing valuables. The progress of the business led me here. But, I must say, there's still a lot I've got to get explained. Did you steal your own bracelet? And if you did, why put my friend Jane, here, in such an embarrassing position by having it dumped in her room, making her seem guilty of theft? That's why I've tracked you down, my dear!"

"I know nothing about 'Jane here.' And Beryl put my bracelet in Aunt's room, in the Blue Room, since you want to know!" The beautiful and famous Alfreda Waul was apparently endowed with a temper as well as with a talent. "But you are putting her in a rather embarrassing position yourself, my dear brother, if I may suggest it, holding her hand and bringing her where she isn't wanted and where she has no business to be. It's like you to snoop around and spoil all my fun—you always did—but why initiate Jane, whoever she is, into the game?"

Jane had pulled her hand from Paul's. "See

here," Paul said hotly. "That's all rather rude, you know, Freda. Allow me to present Miss Dyke, my partner in the detective business. And you ought to realize that if any one but Grace had discovered your bit of jewelry in Jane's room this noon—Jane happens to be occupying the Blue Room—you would have got Miss Dyke into a lot of trouble. I think you owe Miss Dyke, even if you don't owe me, an explanation."

"Oh, heavens! What a mix-up it has all been! Too utterly silly! But come in, you two. Does any one else know you're here? How did you get in?"

"By the window over the garden wall," Paul answered, as they followed her into the luxurious living room. "And nobody does know. If you'll just clear up the whole situation for us by a few explanations, perhaps we can fix it so that no one need ever know. All we want is to relieve poor Aunt Augusta's mind as to the safety of the bracelet which she thinks she has lost for you—and clear Jane, too, of Aunt's suspicions, which have been, all along, centered on her."

Suddenly Alfreda Waul was a different person. She turned into a merry soul, sparkling with fun and mischief.

"Well, I am sorry if Jane has suffered," she said. "But it must have livened Grace's house party up a bit! The guests must have had quite a lot of excitement and entertainment. Close the door, Paul. I've got the bay window out there in the passage open to make doubly certain nobody will hear Beryl playing. I always do that when I play here. The walls are soundproof, of course, but Aunt has ears keener than ordinary human beings, and so I bring in the surf as an accomplice. Let's draw up chairs here by these windows, and then Beryl and I will straighten out any parts of your snarl that still remain."

It was odd the way bad tempers had given place to sunshine and friendliness on both sides. Beryl grinned at Jane, and Jane chuckled. Life was exciting.

They arranged themselves comfortably in a group of bright chintz-covered chairs by the rain-driven window in the corner of the room farthest from the piano. There Jane, by leaning forward a little, could look down on to the gray, foamy, tumbled ocean. This room, apparently, hung out over the Atlantic like an enclosed balcony.

"Well, there is no need of questions, as I see

it," Paul exclaimed, when they were all settled. "Just fire ahead, Freda, and tell your romantic story. For it's bound to be romantic, since it's yours. May I have a cigarette?"

CHAPTER XIX

SIMPLICITY ITSELF

"YOU are entirely on the wrong track," his sister said with some asperity. "There is nothing romantic about any of it. Just practical common sense." Evidently the famous pianist had suffered before now under her young brother's attacks on her romanticism. "But you must tell me something yourself before I begin. What is all the fuss about, anyway? What business is it of Aunt's what has become of my bracelet, since it isn't hers and has nothing to do with her?"

"Don't be an idiot," Paul replied, forgetting for the minute to light his cigarette and looking really put out. "Of course, it has everything to do with her. It was in her keeping, wasn't it? Why, she feels more responsible for it, of course, than as though it *were* hers!"

"I see." Alfreda nodded, musingly. "Well, we've been having such a jolly time out here alone in our sea cage, with music and everything

we both love, Beryl and I, that I suppose I have been very thoughtless. And it has come near spoiling everything, spoiling the secret Grace and I have kept for two years—Big Grace, your Grace's mother," she added in explanation, seeing Jane prick up her ears extraordinarily. "Well, here goes with the story."

And it really was all commonsensible, and not so very romantic or weird at all when it was told. Stripped of the famous Alfreda's rather florid manner of recounting, it came down to this: Alfreda loved Surfgate as she loved no other spot or house in the world. More than that, she felt that she had always done her best work at practising here. There was something in the atmosphere ("in the vibration," as she expressed it) that gave her new power and mastery. And so, as Paul very well knew, she had made a habit of spending retreats here, from the beginnings of her concert career. But, alas! of late years Aunt Augusta had got something of the same bee in her bonnet. She too felt that the atmosphere of Surfgate was at the same time both restful and stimulating, and she herself had begun to spend rather a good part of her time absorbing it. And of course, dear kind Grace (Big Grace) would never have the heart to dis-

courage her in these visits, or allow her to feel in the slightest degree unwelcomed. But Alfreda and her aunt were not *simpatica.* They had only to be under the same roof for a single night for Alfreda to lose both her poise and her self-confidence. (Jane chuckled, at this point, thoroughly appreciating Alfreda's sentiments.)

"Tell me, how can I go on with my practising with Aunt listening and commenting!" Alfreda shrugged her shoulders and lifted up her hands. "She has never understood about not interrupting, Aunt! She thinks her knitting is more important than my playing. She will ask me to help her hunt for her needle in the middle of the Appassionata."

So Mrs. Merriman, the kind but easy-going Grace, had hit upon the idea of turning the nursery wing into a safe and secret nest for the temperamental Alfreda. It was necessary for the servants to know, of course, but not at all necessary for the family. When Paul and little Grace and Aunt were all away, then the secret door was left unbolted and Alfreda came and went, an ordinary member of the household. But when Paul or little Grace or Aunt were there, the door was bolted again, and meals were brought to Alfreda surreptitiously, on a tray, by

one of the servants. As Alfreda came to Surfgate for nothing in the world but practise and a renewal of vitality, she felt no loneliness at these times and counted her complete seclusion as pure gain.

"And wasn't it all simply perfect for our little scheme!" Alfreda broke off to laugh like a mischievous child. "Wasn't it simply perfect that Father had had the walls of the nursery wing made sound-proof when he added to the house! He did hate the rumpus we children made. And so he hit upon the idea of shutting us off up here in this wing in such a way that he was never disturbed again unless he wanted to be. He sent for us when he wanted us, and that was an end of it. Other times, he wouldn't be bothered. Well, I am like Father! And now I can practise as loud as I like, pound out the chords, and not a human ear can hear. Even in summer, when the windows are open, it is almost safe, for the surf just under this room, as it is, drowns everything."

"But the bracelet? Why did you steal your own bracelet?" Paul hurried her on.

"That's amusing too. I was roaming the house at large on Thursday. Aunt had sent a telegram to say she was coming, but the hour of

her arrival we didn't know. I was at the piano in the drawing room when one of the maids rushed in to tell me that her automobile was at the very door. I made a very quick get-away up the staircase behind the piano. You have thought that for two years that key was lost, haven't you, Paul! I hoped and prayed Aunt hadn't heard me playing as she drove up. But I had forgotten something. I had left my bracelet behind, very stupidly, on top of the piano. I had taken it off when I began playing because —well, one cannot know the becauses of all one's actions, can one! And, of course, Aunt had to pounce on it almost the first minute of her entrance into the drawing room. Grace was there, and explained to her, truthfully enough, that I had been here and just left. Trust Grace never to tell a lie. So Aunt appropriated the article because of its money value and wore it on her own wrist, the more surely to keep it safe for her careless little niece. But I didn't know that Aunt had even seen it until Beryl just happened to tell me this morning that the bracelet, or a bracelet, rather, had been stolen. Then, I realized what a mess it all was, and I sent Beryl to the Blue Room with it, letting her out through the secret door. I thought we were perfectly

safe, for Cook had just sent up my lunch, and the maid who brought it assured me everyone was in the great hall waiting for lunch. I told Beryl just to throw the bracelet in under the bureau or bed, as though it had rolled there. I thought that would end this pother about a thief among the guests. I was truly concerned, you see."

"Yes. I see. But how did you come into possession of the bracelet? You haven't told us that. Had Beryl really taken it, as Jane thought, when she picked up her handkerchief from the piano? Have you known each other before? We are still puzzled, Jane and I." Paul had finished his cigarette and now took another.

"Oh, that's the jolly part of the story." Alfreda and Beryl smiled at each other at this point with understanding comradeliness. "In my sudden exit from the drawing room, Thursday afternoon, I must have forgotten to lock the door behind the piano, for some time Friday it blew open. That must have been when the wind changed and the rain began. That was how it happened that I heard Beryl playing. I was horrified suddenly to hear a sound from the other side of my sound-proof walls. It had never happened before, and, of course, I reasoned that if I could hear you down there, why,

you could hear me up here. I began a hunt for the place where the sound was coming through. Of course, it led me to the staircase. I stole down and found the door standing wide open! It is behind the screen, that door, of course, and so I knew I would be safe in closing it softly. No one would see it closing. But I didn't close it. I waited, listening, absolutely entranced, to Beryl's music instead.

"I had to know who was playing like that, for it was genius. Yes. I do not exaggerate. I peeked around the edge of the screen just a little. I saw that it was a young girl. Immediately I was swept away. I was delighted. I was out of myself. I crept up the stair into the room. I saw that you were all half asleep instead of listening to Beryl's really wonderful performance, and Aunt's back was turned. I wanted to see the player's hands. I took the one step necessary to the piano and stood watching, well in the shadow. I——"

Jane interrupted, laughing, eagerly. "And I saw you. I wasn't asleep. You were in the shadow, almost invisible, but your Chinese shawl caught the firelight and shone beautifully. I thought it was Mrs. Merriman because of the shawl."

"Yes. Paul gave us our shawls, last Christmas. They are identical. As I was saying, I stood entranced, and then, with only half my attention, I noticed my own bracelet lying right there under my hand. 'Heavens!' I thought. 'It's been here all the time. Fortunate Aunt hasn't seen it!' and I grabbed it up, and then, afraid my impulsive motion might have been noticed, I slid back behind the screen, and this time locked the door after me. You know the rest."

"No, we don't. What about Beryl? How did you get in contact with her? We don't know that," Paul asked, rather impatiently.

"You might guess that. It is simplicity itself. I went right to Grace's room, for I hadn't noticed her downstairs with the rest of you; and asked her about the young genius who was playing. She told me all she knew, and which room she was to sleep in. Then, of course, the minute I thought the household were all safely in their rooms, I unbolted the secret door and stole out, turning on the light over the Blue Room door —which I think, by the way, ought to burn all night. Grace's economies are always an irritation to me. But I had made a miscalculation. I had taken a nap soon after dinner, and when I

woke my watch had stopped and I could only guess at the time. It was nearer morning than midnight, I am afraid. But anyway, I woke Beryl up, and got her to promise to steal off here in the morning and play for me. And Jane —Janehere— (Have I the name right?) came knocking on the door because she had seen Beryl peeking out to make sure the coast was clear for my return to the nursery wing.—That's something *you've* got to explain, Jane, now. What were you doing prowling about at almost three o'clock in the morning?" Alfreda had suddenly turned her brilliant gaze on Jane accusingly.

Jane laughed. She was finding Alfreda Waul extremely amusing; and she did not mind a bit her teasing about the name or her dramatically accusing gaze. "It was your fault entirely," Jane said boldly. Alfreda made one want to treat her like a child in spite of the fact that she was almost an old woman, at least over thirty! Jane realized now that she *liked* being treated so and didn't mind at all Paul's patronizing manner to her. "When you opened the secret door, the wind in your passageway blew my door open. That woke me up. I wonder you didn't notice the Blue Room door was standing wide

open yourself, especially since you thought your aunt was sleeping in there."

Alfreda started. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed, appalled. "It's a wonder I didn't. I am an idiot, just as Paul says."

"I beg your pardon, dear, if I said it," Paul sounded apologetic, but there was a twinkle in his eye. "No wonder Beryl overslept this morning, though. I see it all now. You were a naughty girl, Freda, to go waking guests up at that hour. But I see she has forgiven you."

"Oh, yes, indeed she has forgiven me." The two musicians again exchanged affectionate, comradely glances. "But, now, what's to be done? You have the bracelet. Aunt doesn't know you have it, though? Tell me, Paul, how are we ever to return it to her in such a way that she will stop accusing Grace's guests (poor little Grace!) of thievery and at the same time keep my secret. She just mustn't ever know I am in the house at all. You'll have to fix it up, Paul. You are the resourceful member of this family."

But Paul, after all, was not so resourceful as his partner. Jane, quite a second or two ago, had faced this problem for herself and met it. She was on her feet now, her eyes sparkling,

chuckling. "Oh, I know. I know!" she cried. "Listen!"

And she unfolded her plan. All that she needed was a little rouge, a lip stick and a bright scarf or rag or duster or something like that. That was absolutely all. What a lark it would be! Better than charades! This *was* a house party! Darling little Grace! And scornful, sleepy Max! And poor bewildered Aunt Augusta! She'd make 'em open their eyes!

"Good for you, partner!" Paul applauded. "You've got more than charm. *You've got brains.* Here! Everybody help."

To the accompaniment of much giggling, chuckling, and finally outright laughter, they worked together over the preparations for the last act of this drama.

CHAPTER XX

JANE CAN DANCE

TEA–TIME that afternoon at Surfgate found a rather dejected group of people in the drawing room gathered around the tea table where, again, Aunt Augusta was presiding. That is, everyone appeared to be a little glum except Mr. Paul Waul. That young man, for some reason or other, was finding himself in high spirits. He passed around the teacups and the cakes as though such service delighted his soul. The corners of his mouth were twitching with suppressed merriment.

"That's all, Aunt," he exclaimed, finally returning to the tea-table and dropping into a chair at Miss Williams's elbow. "Now it's our turn. Let me pour yours and fix it, and then you can pour mine. It tastes better that way."

The aunt looked at her nephew fondly. The friendship and understanding that existed between these two was an odd and rather touching thing to observe. Paul had been championing the crotchety Miss Williams since he was four

and she was forty. At least, the occasion of his fourth birthday was the earliest memory of their alliance. She had stood by him in an important crisis of his life then, and his childish gratitude had blossomed into lasting affection. His family, at that time, was made up entirely of women, his father having died before his memory began. At four, then, the question came up as to the cutting of his curls. His mother and his two sisters had been extremely loth. Paul was an enchanting baby, and they appreciated that and meant to keep him enchanting. It was at this point that Aunt Augusta had fought and very nearly bled for the little person with whom, in this matter of curls, she saw eye to eye. And together, with their combined determinations, they had won. Since then, their alliance had remained flourishing and strong. They counted on each other for sympathy in the things that really mattered.

So now Aunt Augusta sat back while Paul poured her a cup of tea, and watched him contentedly while he broke a sugar lump in two for her exactly as she liked it and filled the cup up with cream. For the minute the worry that had been occupying her mind to the exclusion of any peace or pleasure was brushed away. In almost

a genial mood she asked, looking about inquiringly, "Where is Miss Dyke? Isn't she going to have any tea?"

Mrs. Merriman, who had just come into the room and joined the group about the tea table answered. "She is still in bed, I think. Her door is closed, and I hope she is sleeping. She wasn't feeling very well this noon, you know."

Miss Williams snorted at that, and who can blame her? She remembered Jane as she had seen her not so very long ago—it was after luncheon, anyway—balancing herself, all got up in a chiffon evening dress, on the garden wall. But Paul spoke quickly and softly before his aunt should have time to go into that with Mrs. Merriman. "She's all right," he said in her ear. "Naturally, she's a little in awe of you, dear. But she said she'd come to dinner. Her dress got rather torn or something, I guess. Anyway, she has retired."

"I should think she'd better retire and change into something reasonable," Miss Williams replied to that. "I can't see why you encourage her, Paul, in her uncouth behavior. What's to be done about the bracelet now? It doesn't seem to me that you are doing anything."

"It is all pretty dark, isn't it?" Paul sympa-

thized. "But I have done one thing, Aunt. I have proved to myself, absolutely to a certainty, that Jane has nothing whatever to do with it."

Mrs. Merriman, who had meant to inquire what her aunt meant about Jane's having better change into "something reasonable," forgot that intention at this sudden cropping up of the bracelet bother again. Shrugging her shoulders, to show her displeasure, she turned away to the piano, and sitting down on the bench began playing ever so lightly and softly some old folk music. Mrs. Merriman was almost as worried and puzzled about the disappearance of the bracelet as her aunt was. But she had not yet found herself able to believe that one of Grace's guests had stolen it. She still expected the bracelet to turn up in some unimaginable but innocent enough way. She was extremely sorry for Grace and for Grace's guests, and she was more annoyed with her aunt than she generally allowed herself to be. She thrummed out a folk dance gradually louder and louder, her eyes centered on one of the windows at the far end of the room. The gusts of rain blowing against the pane expressed her own uneasy mood.

But suddenly her fingers were suspended, her eyes widened and darkened with surprise.

"What's that?" she cried. "Look!"

Her excitement was contagious. Everyone put down his tea cup and looked. And then everyone looked harder. On the other side of the long window there was a figure—dancing!

It was a gypsy girl. Her dark head was bound in a brilliant green kerchief. Huge round earrings hung at her ears, swaying as she danced. She was wrapped in a gorgeously colored but ragged gypsy shawl. Her face was dark, as though tanned by a Southern sun, but her lips were startlingly red, and under her very dark, very straight brows, her eyes were brilliant.

Paul drew in his breath sharply. He had not been prepared for Jane's dancing talent. She was dancing there in the wind and rain like nothing in the world but a spirit of the elements. It was so marvelous, her dancing, that he almost stood up and cried, "Bravo! Hurrah! Do it again."

Fortunately, he remembered, however, the part he must play.

Suddenly, the gypsy girl seemed to become aware of her audience. On the instant she was transformed. Her whole spirit was altered as though by magic. A creature of greed, and of meanness and slyness, sprang into being. She

leaned toward the window, tapped on it, and peering in, her dark eyes close against the pane, beckoned. Paul did not know that Jane had observed this very change that morning in the two gypsies at Harmony Cove. He thought it was sheer creative genius on her part. For the minute he almost believed that she *was* a gypsy —it was so wonderfully done. *That couldn't be Jane!*

But before any one else had time to get ahead of him, he drew himself together and hurried to the window. Unbolting the catch, he opened wide the pane, as though inviting the wild-looking gypsy girl in. All the people inside the room were on their feet now. They were bored and dejected no longer. With the opening of the window, fresh air had swept into the room, clearing their heads and their hearts, waking them up. But the gypsy girl did not follow the rain and the wind into the drawing room. Instead, she thrust something white into Paul's hand, and then, almost before any one could be aware of her movements, she was gone. There was no one but Paul at the window, and the rain.

He turned about, looking down at the white thing in his hand. His face expressed rather stupid surprise. Paul himself was not a bad

actor. "It's addressed to you, Aunt," he cried. "A letter."

"Oh, no," Miss Williams ejaculated. "It can't be." No one knew better than she that no crazy young gypsy girls were numbered among her acquaintances. "But it is," Paul said, and gave the envelope into her hands. She dropped it instantly on to the tea table in front of her, her face showing extreme disgust. And that was not surprising, for it was a very soiled old envelope that Paul had presented to her. It looked as though it had been picked out of an ash barrel somewhere.

"I won't touch it," Miss Williams exclaimed. "But it *is* addressed to me." She bent above the wavering scrawl of the address. "Miss Augusta Williams, Surfgate."

Everyone was crowded around the table now, looking with keenest curiosity down at the grimy envelope.

"I'll open it," Paul offered.

"Very well. Open it. But you must wash your hands directly afterward."

Mr. Waul lifted the envelope in his finger tips and using a paper cutter from a table near by, slit its end. He pulled out a sheet of ruled paper that was grimier, if that were possible,

than the envelope which had contained it. The writing was in pale purple ink, very faint and wobbly, some of it in printed characters, some in longhand. He read, as though with difficulty making out the sense:

"DEAR LADY:
"If weird mystery
Doth astound,
Go where mystery
Doth abound.

"Where a lady
Veiled doth stand,
The solution
In her hand.

"For your oracle
She will be.
Very truly yours,
"A GYPSY."

The punctuation Paul had supplied in his reading. There was none on the paper.

"What! What crazy nonsense is that? Read it again." Aunt Augusta advanced toward Paul, her eyes almost eating up the paper in his hand. He backed away, reading it over again. As he reached the signature "A Gypsy" he had

backed quite to the fireplace, and very quickly, as though impulsively, he turned about and dropped the paper and envelope into the blaze. It caught fire and flared vividly for an instant, while Aunt Augusta and everyone else there—for they had all crowded to the fireplace—read the words "A Gypsy" scrawled in large characters the whole width of the crackling page.

"This is the silliest nonsense I ever heard of." Aunt Augusta looked around at all their faces suspiciously.

"It may be silly nonsense," Paul agreed quickly. "And at the same time, it may be just what we are looking for.

"'If weird mystery
Doth astound,
Go where mystery
Doth abound;
Where a lady
Veiled doth stand,
The solution
In her hand.'

"Now who is that?"

His sister Mrs. Merriman answered. There were relief and amusement in her face.

"The Lady of Mystery!" she cried. "Of

course, it's that monstrosity, the Lady of Mystery. We are told to consult her about the lost bracelet. What could be more sensible!"

Paul grinned. He hadn't been prepared for such assistance from his sister, for there had been no time to initiate her into the plans of the conspirators. To her, the disappearance of the bracelet was still a mystery, and up until an instant ago it had been a very worrying one. But her quick wit and the strain of whimsical humor that she possessed in common with Paul enlightened her now. She didn't know the whole story, of course; but she felt certain that the bracelet was safe and that no one of Grace's guests was to be implicated in its disappearance or reappearance, for that matter. So she threw herself whole-heartedly into the spirit of the game now on foot, whatever that game was.

"Come along," she laughed. "Let's go to the Lady of Mystery, and question her as an oracle." She herself led the way toward the Room of Doors. Paul and "Little Grace" and Beryl were the last to follow.

"What's it going to be?" Grace whispered to her young uncle. "Is Jane all right? Have you seen her?"

"Sh! We'll tell you all about it to-night. Mum's the word now."

Beryl was having great difficulty in suppressing a fit of giggling that had overtaken her. "Wasn't Jane gorgeous!" she gasped, between giggles.

"I'll say so," Paul responded, glowing. "But, shh!"

Aunt Augusta saw it sparkling the instant she entered the room, the boys and girls crowding at her back. And of course Mrs. Merriman had already seen it, for she was ahead of them all. Dangling carelessly and casually from the long tapering white fingers of the statue hung the dazzling jeweled bracelet.

Aunt Augusta strode directly up to the Lady of Mystery and, without any ceremony whatever or a word of apology or thanks, snached the bracelet from her light grasp.

"Of all the silly nonsense!" she exclaimed again. She whirled about then and inspected the group of wide-eyed spectators there present. Her glance ran keenly from one to another. She looked ready to pounce. But she did not pounce. After an instant she dropped her glance to the retrieved valuable, safe again

in her possession, and her expression softened. Then she looked quickly up at her nephew.

"Do you know," she exclaimed, "I'd say that that crazy gypsy who threw the note in at the window was Miss Jane Dyke, and no other on earth, if I hadn't seen her with my own eyes. But as it is, I did see her, and she was a regular gypsy sure enough. And now I'll say again what I've been saying for years. We oughtn't to let them camp at Harmony Cove or anywhere on land we own. I have always thought it was a mistake. You never know what mischief they will do. Does Jane Dyke know those gypsies? She and that gypsy girl may have been playing tricks together. She looks capable of anything, Grace's Jane Dyke!"

But now everyone began to laugh and talk at once. Spirits that had been dull were revived. Worry, care, suspicions, dropped from young shoulders. "I say," Max Colt cried, gleefully, "let's all get right out for a tramp before dinner. We're free now, aren't we? We're free!" And then he added, forgetting in his exuberance his twenty-four hour grudge against Jane, "Let's get Jane to come too. We'll go 'way over the Blue Ridge Landing and see the surf. It's a sight after a storm."

And that is what they did. Only Grace, who had been sent to get Jane to join the expedition, returned to say that her friend was going to stay in her room, resting quietly, until dinner, but that she would be down then.

"I think that's very wise of her," Mrs. Merriman murmured, as though relieved, and then she looked at her young brother with an amused gleam in her clever face.

When Jane, fresh and rested, floated down the stairs that evening, dressed for dinner in her green frock, she thought the great hall was deserted. Laughter and music and chatter were coming from the drawing-room door. At last Grace's house party began to sound like a success. Jane smiled to herself. It was all very jolly. But she did not cross at once to the drawing room. Instead, she veered off toward the conservatory. She felt that she needed a rose, a yellow rose, to make her costume complete—or, rather, perhaps, to make her happiness complete. As she vanished into the dim greenery behind the double glass doors, someone rose up from a chair in the hall, where she had sat unnoticed by Jane, waiting for dinner to be announced. It was Miss Augusta Williams.

"Well, *now* I wonder what that girl is up to!" she ejaculated to herself. "I'll wait right here and see."

Then Paul came down the stairs. "Hello, Aunt," he called. "What are you looking at? Is there a ghost loose in the conservatory?"

Aunt Augusta put her hand on his arm. "Never you mind. Just stay here with me," she commanded mysteriously. Paul waited obediently. He waited until something glimmered, moving behind the glass doors. Then they opened and Jane Dyke came through, a yellow rose in her hand; and after the door was shut at her back, she began arranging it in her girdle, standing in profile to her unrealized audience, looking into a mirror on the wall.

"Well, this is the limit of everything," Aunt Augusta exclaimed under her breath, and before Paul realized at all what she meant to do, she advanced upon Jane.

"Miss Dyke," she said in a tone that somehow sounded victorious and pleased at the same time that it rang with displeasure, "your hostess, Mrs. Merriman, never lets any one pick her roses. Even I would hardly think of doing such a thing. And those yellow roses are especially rare and valued. I should think——"

But Paul had stepped forward, overtaking his aunt, and now he was at Jane's side and had turned about, his arm linked in hers. "Dear," he said to the old lady, smiling at her whimsically, "you've been on the wrong track about Jane all along. This is *my* rose Jane is wearing, or, rather, it's a rose I picked for her this noon, with Grace's full consent, and which, after I'd given it to her, Jane left in safe keeping with a motherly red rose bush until wanted. Do you see?"

Jane chuckled in spite of her discomfiture in the situation. "Paul Waul," she cried. "Now how did you know what I had done with your rose? You *are* a sleuth!"

Paul chuckled too. His laugh and Jane's were peculiarly alike.

"We're a couple of sleuths," he amended. "Successful partners in sleuthing. How about letting it be known from this hour forth that we are really and truly a going concern? 'Waul and Dyke, Incorporated!' Our motto could be 'Nothing can get by us!' And Aunt is conveniently here to start us off with her blessing."

But Aunt Augusta raised her hands in consternation rather than in a blessing. "Land alive! Merciful heavens! You sound as though

you were in earnest, Paul Waul!" she ejaculated.

"Certainly I'm in earnest, in dead earnest," Paul assured her. "I have been in dead earnest from the instant I laid eyes on Jane here. Who wouldn't be?"

But Jane, who had turned rather pale, said nothing. She merely looked at Aunt Augusta.

Now, the really mysterious part of this whole affair for those who are avid of mystery is that Miss Augusta Williams did, in time, give them her blessing.

THE END